The Beat Within

THE BEAT WI[illegible]EEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE ▪VOLUME 13.19

There are days I just want to break down and howl,
To give up completely, to throw in the towel,
But I hold my head up high and push my way through.
I have too much to give and so much to do.
And I make a vow, that though it'll be hard,
I'll go on with a smile and play every card.
I'll give all I can, help others to love.
No matter what happens, love will bloom again

read the rest of Lucky Lokon's POW on page 8

About a month ago our colleague and friend Allan Tinker called it quits as a Beat colleague. Allan gave us ten years of workshops facilitating, typing and editing, to driving to pick up Beats at the office, to picking up colleagues from BART or our homes and carpooling to and from workshops. Allan's spirit is missed tremendously. He is one of the best! We can only hope and pray that he gets his health back and will consider The Beat Within again.

The other day this editor was talking to a facilitator who has taken over a workshop of Allan's, and while bouncing around ideas, we thought in would be a good idea to get Allan to write something to The Beat Within, particularly to the young people who know him in Alameda County Juvenile Hall and Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. We were going to read what ever he wrote aloud to the classes, but given the length and love put into this raw piece of writing, with very little editing, if any at all, we decided to feature this epic poem in this week's editor's note. This poem, "Making Yourself Free," goes out to all of you, particularly you writers who know Allan.

Make Yourself Free
wish i could write somethin' with jump and speed
equal to what y'all in th' hall be callin' greed
ya jus' greedy for th' wrong thangs too young too soon
grew up that way lookin' t' trade all that pain for pay
tried t' find a way t' walk on th' moon and stay wit' yo' goons
forever livin' fast and cold and bold and lavish and large
at sixteen or seventeen tryin' to be the one in charge
well i can't tell ya nothin' ya don't already know
'bout the life ya use to live and where ya gonna go
but i gotta find a way to say somethin' harda 'in that
gotta figure a way to say good-bye to th' real plus th' j-cat way in the back
least y'all call 'im a j-cat and the next one y'all call a hater
too much hate in that place y'all in and everyone of ya commit that sin
but i'm tryin' to figure some way to say "see ya later" when i know
it's not likely to be so 'cause i'm leavin' th' beat behind
not jus' 'cause my ol' body turnin' back on me wit' flashin' pain
shoulder, elbows, neck, back ain't got nothin' over the pain in my brain
from watchin' y'all and ya older brothers and brothers by another mother
and legends writ' large from a tee-shirt to ya rooms' walls in the hall
jus' the other day i got a call from vincent williams in the 'Y'
and when i said he sounded good he let out a deep low vocalized sigh
and i told him i could hear all the pain he still endured locked up inside
and he was a success story when he got th' Y and not the Pen
some of y'all know jus' what i'm talkin' 'bout and wish you was him
y'all know i'm against the death penalty and life in prison both
and i'm against tryin' a juvenile as an adult no matter what went down
'cause i know some of y'all might jus' get harder even wit' a chance at parole
and i know some of y'all will see th' light and turn to it even wit' nowhere to go
y'all heard me tell the story of the young man who saw the ghost of the one he killed
and it turned into an angel and he wrestled wit' it all night long until
he got a blessing after all that stressing and he turned his life over to god
he called his god allah and i must have bought him a dozen books in allah's praise
and so far as i know he's still holdin' strong to his faith and he still prays
for the power he needs to continue to live by th' light of his new ways of thought
'cause of all the battles he fought and won or the day he killed and got caught
of all the highs and lows in his life the night he felt that ghostly angel's grip he lost
all of the false pride and self-made lies and misguided hate that shaped his fate
and he saw anotha way that he could follow all his days even locked away fo' life
man if you hear this story and you're too numb to feel either his pain or his gain
man, you're not alone in that colder than cold heart zone you call your own
but don't get mad when i tell ya that i pray ya heart will crack and let in some light
what the hell, i'm supposed to be explainin' myself and i'm preachin' advice
nah, you're right, i ought to be ashamed of myself fo' quittin' on you most of all
'cause yo' childlike heart closed it's doors after years of fears and rage and abuse
that had you thinkin' you was a man who could do whatever whenever ya choose
ya figure ya lost ever'thing ya could lose so why not try the fast track to money and fame
what i'm tryna say is no one should ever blame ya like you was what you thought
doin' what ya damaged heart inflamed wit' hope and hate in place of love was taught
and even if yo' juvenile heart's gone numb and yo' brain gone dumb on a sucka
which is the name you came to call any other youngsta
that's looks softer than a down thug and even if ya cold thoughts jus' wrote me off
as one mo' fake okay mutha—what i'm tryin'
to say is until ya take ya head out the devil's jaws and put his lies on pause
ya losin' the only one that can take you through this mess whatever comes up next
and that's y'self transformed not all at once but day by day by day by everything you do
writing words on a page fo' the beat once a week or fo' y'self
every day can take the place of the mighty angel that j-roc gripped
and held till he was himself blessed with light by which i mean insight
beyond th' lessons of the street that had led him to defeat
your writing words fo' the beat can like iron-jawed angels reach heaven's seat
and win a blessing that may burn like the fires of hell as day by day you turn
each link in a chain the devil made into a step by step march to freedom first within
and then without these walls of retribution you'll never return to your old confusion
having found the final solution to be finding the light by which you see your way clear
to become master of yourself, your hates and fears and self-deluding lies put aside at last
that's your task and mine as well, thanks, these last ten years reading The Beat
humbling myself to sit at the feet of the damned and see truth in you
however painful or full of hate or love or damning your fate, i thank you for your words
at sixty years of age, i'll take a break and seek to heal myself from nothing worse
than simple physical pain: my shoulders, elbows, back and neck; and then my brain
i'm not gonna throw that word "love" around too fast and easy 'cause it sounds
not only soft but fake, and yet my dreams of love will not reject a murderer's face
and that's something i've learned in my years of spoken and written words from you
it allowed me to see the poetry in my dying father's heart and accept it all as true
as he gasped his last breaths i even found words to speak i'd written only in the beat
words addressed to you and your enemy too, that give you what you need to be free
that's it, good-bye, maybe i'll swing by to see you again and maybe i won't
for over a decade i've freely walked into this shameful place of pain that shouldn't be
good-bye, and if your mind sometime remembers me, remember this: make yourself free.

The topics addressed in issue 13.19 prior to the writing featured in this issue were

"How has the world changed?" - Change is a sure-thing in all our lives. As we get older, our bodies change. As we gain experience, our thinking changes. We watch as technology develops cell phones and hybrids cars. We see styles of clothes change. Music changes from generation to generation. Even our language and the words we use change. So tell us how about the changes you have seen in your young lives — from the materialistic to the intangible. What is different about the world now than when you were coming up? How have the streets changed? What has technology brought? And what about you is different? Your ideas? Your feelings? Your circumstances?

The second topic, "The next person to occupy my cell" - Everybody reading this topic will, sooner or later, walk out of the cell you've been assigned. Tragically, just as soon as you leave it, someone else will fill it. What can you tell that person about what he or she can expect? What advice can you give to make his or her life in this place smoother? And, even more important, what knowledge have you gained here that will help the person that follows you from ever returning?

Last topic, "Is your life easier — or harder — than your parents' life?"

Most of you have heard the stories your mom or dad (or your grandparents) tell about what life was like when they were coming up. When you compare your life to theirs, what are the biggest differences? Are there things that remain the same? Whose life do you think has been harder, yours or theirs? Why? Tell us what you know about their young lives (with as many details as you can remember), and then contrast their lives with yours.

All right editorial note readers, lets get to the heart and soul of this publication, your writings!!! This one goes out to Allan Tinker. Thanks Allan, the door is always open!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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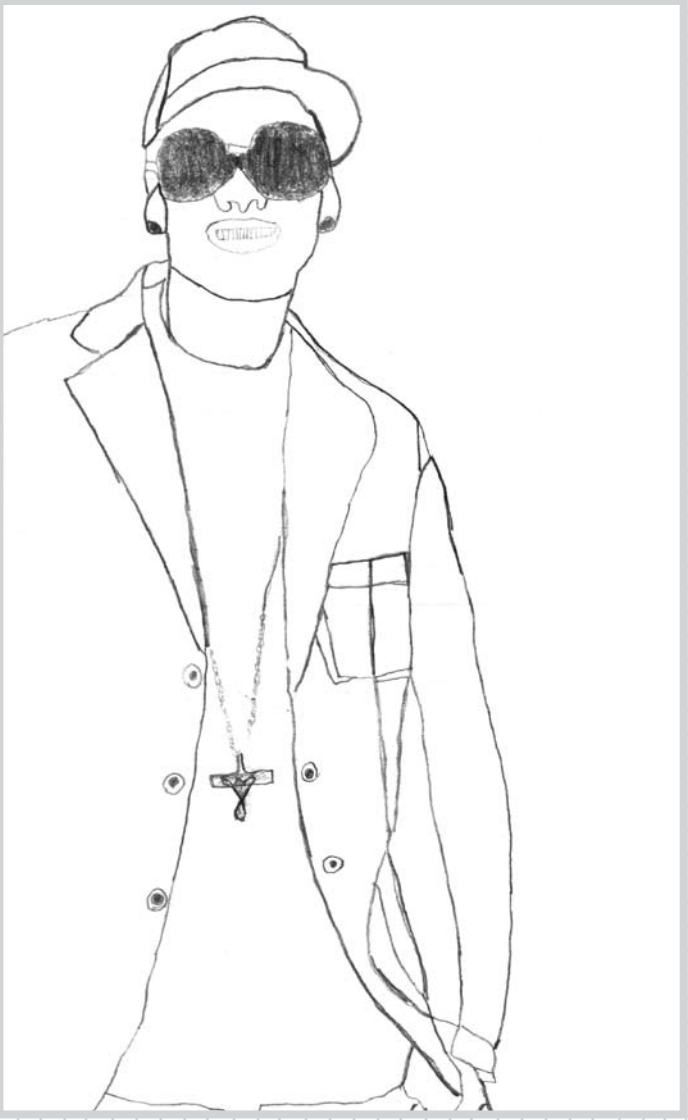


A Plan To Read And Succeed

They pulled the trigger, Bang!
And there went the signal for heaven or hell
To claim another soul of a victim who fell
If only those asses knew the victim real well
He had a mother, a brother, a newborn, a wife
The victim changed his ways, started a new life Those selfish children took it just to earn a stripe
Y'all know what I'm sayin', y'all pro'ly earned one before
You pro'ly caught a factor slippin' right by Bay Shore
But this man wasn't no factor, at least not no more
He knew if he stopped his reality would soar
So his life was goin' good, two years away from the shhh
Still lived in the 'hood, but been a year since dude got lit
He wanted to repent for the sins he did commit
He wanted to climb out of that illusional pit
That claimed so many victims at the bottom of it But although his life was turning around
There were too many demons to bury under ground
So, since they didn't fit, it was his soul that they found
But back to the story of the kids who killed this man
You see, they had no true goals, they looked at life with no plan
So as this short story has to come to an end
The moral of the story is that we fall at life's hand We must change for our children or they will not survive
We want this land to prosper so that they stay alive
But do you hear what I'm sayin'
'Cause life's game you can't just be playin'
You need a plan you can read
And need to read it to succeed
Don't bleed your time away without shhh to show each day
Then it's our communities that pay and it's to you' families' dismay
They give you everything you need to feed and succeed
And that's why our half won't make it
Unless we finally break it
So let's come to finally shake it

-Bakgwai, San Francisco

From The Beat: Do you have a written plan to read in order to succeed? We know you are not wasting your time, but preparing for a better life to make yourself and your family proud. But just think how much faster your plan will move forward once you're out of here, especially if you never come back!

The World Done Changed

What's good with The Beat? This the Skip ninja outta YGC (You Got Caught). I been on this earth going on 18 years. I done seen a whole lot of stuff change, from fashion to technology, for good and bad. And the whole thing about it is that I'm still a young'n.

When I was growing up, I mean it was still gunshots and violence or whatever, but nowadays this shhh is getting outta control. Ninjas is killing each other over a sucka-ass street or because of a color. Now I ain't tryna be no hypocrite 'cause I claim a set, but I'm still able to see through the BS, unlike some of these ninjas. So I know when enough is enough.

But on a more positive note, I've seen new clothes, the gas prices are just senseless. I'ma video game fanatic and the graphics are unbelievable. But the world has changed, some for better and some for worse.

-Lil' Skippa, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thank you for taking this topic seriously and writing seriously about it. When we see youngsters killing each other and dropping into the system time after time, we also think that "enough is enough." But what does that mean in your life? Does it change anything within you? You've done a good job of explaining the changes you've seen (and there will be a lot more as you grow), but can you also tell us about any changes you've seen in yourself. What do you expect or want to change about yourself as time passes?

How The World Has Changed

Nowadays, everywhere you walk you got people selling you drugs, trying to buy drugs, guns, illegal substances etc. There is violence everywhere you go. Violence in your own family and people close to you. Young kids dying for no reason by their own people. The police in our community.

The streets nowadays changed, like young ladies getting pregnant at the age of 14, 15, 16, not able to live their lives good because they got big responsibility. Young men going to the juvenile center getting one to two years maybe even more.

Technology changed the world by putting new things in the streets. Maybe it's not bad, but it hurts people because they get beat up or killed for a ipod or a phone.

The things nowadays change me by, like I look at things different. Like maybe at the age of 16 I might have wanted a gun for protection or to try to look cool or be hard. But I express myself by words or play sports to get rid of my anger.

I think maybe they should get all these weapons and all drugs out the streets, and get kids into school and stop building jails and prisons because they think we are just animals there to clean somebody's underwear or clothes.

-Chucky, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a very impressive piece of writing, Chucky, and the most impressive thing about it is how much change it shows in you. Not only do you see the world differently now — recognizing that thinking is a far more powerful weapon than guns in the long run — but you are also observing things differently, analyzing things differently, and coming to very different conclusions about life. So we have to ask you how this maturity will change your actions when you walk out of here. We think you should be in college, learning about things you haven't thought about before, and teaching things they haven't thought about before. What are your plans?

Brain Washed

Chillin' in a place you get ya face knocked off if ya enter
Years done gone past, my crew is gettin' thinner
Yeah, we all dead or locked
In San Quentin, Pelican bay, Tracy, Folsom
This ain't livin'
This can't be right
All my life been just a ninja
Shell-shocked out on the block
Tryin' not to remember
Smoke away the ghost
Of my patnas that still linger
They deep in my thoughts
My patna got shot
My patna can't walk
Can't see me, can't talk
He gone, right in my eye sight
Smack my chick in the face every night
'Til the bread right
Made my soul cold and a head full of steam
I'll give up everything
If I could just wake up from this dream
I'm brainwashed!
I hustled outside in the raindrops
A lot of dudes gettin' found floatin' by the docks Same time snitches getting washed up like knocks
Yamsayin' this is serious ninja

-Butta, San Francisco

From the Beat: If you can't change the violence outside yourself, can you change the violence inside yourself? (Smacking chicks in the face is something offensive, regardless of the cause.) What do you mean you'd give up everything to wake up from this nightmare? Which comes first, the waking or the giving?

The Life I Choose

The life I choose, I choose the wrong life. I should have been a church boy, but I didn't. I grew up in a violent area. There was shooting every day. There was people coming to my house for drugs. I have family that are members of a gang, and when they were banging, I was watching every little step that they were doing.

I was watching them beat up people, shoot people, so I followed that. I became a person that was into that. I wanted to become just like my uncles. They were my role models. One of my uncles was like a father to me. He would take care of me, be there for me, and give me money. Not like pops. He was never around to give me that kind of good advice.

I'm not blaming my uncles for the way I grew up, I'm blaming myself because I let myself become the way I became. Only if I could stop time and go back and start all over, I would no doubt, but I can't.

I do what I do and I do it because it's life. But it's never too late to change, but until then, I'm always going to be called Grimy, you feel me. Late.

-Grimy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't think it's fair to say a child chooses his life. You may not want to blame your uncles, but you should acknowledge that if you had models that finished school, went to college and got professional jobs, then you probably would have followed on that path. The one thing you are completely right about is that it's never too late to change, and that's true all through life. Think of the small boys coming up behind you, Grimy, and think whether you want them following the things you do. They will, of course, follow, just like you did, so you'd better think very hard about the kind of examples you want to provide for them.

The Next Person To Occupy My Cell

I would tell the next person to expect to be really bored and to miss his family, and that he should not get in any fights while he's here. He should listen to all the rules and everything should go smoothly for being at jail at least. And read a lot of books while he's here.

I would also tell him to use the time that he's here to think about what he did to get here, and to try and change his life around and be good and he won't come back here.

-Arnold, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think everything you say is excellent advice for whoever follows you. We hope you are taking your own advice, because it will keep you from coming back. What books do you like to read? What do you plan to change for the better when you get out?

Easier For Me...

Life is easier because there is no slavery and black people can vote. Everyone can go to any school and not have a white person tell them, "Whites Only." Everyone can play sports or sit on any part of the bus that they want.

Life Is Harder For Me...

Life is hard because if you get three strikes you get 25 to life. Back in the day, you only get like 10 years. Then you are guilty until proven innocent. Then they are charging juvenile as adults. And there are a lot more diseases and STDs that they are finding.

-Ran T, San Francisco

From The Beat: We like how you laid this out, starting with how your life is easier than it was in the day, and then switching it up. We think you've identified many things which make your life easier in some respects and harder in others. How do you protect yourself against three strikes and STDs? What kind of power and control do you have over your own life?

One Chance

Some say you only get one chance.
Mess this one up and with the devil you'll dance.
They say he's stuck in the last century.
My dreams ain't coming true.
Guess they weren't meant to.
Watch as my life crumbles and the memories fade.
Locked down for years may be his fate.
No laughter, no signs of love on his face.
To his homies – a hero. To his family – a disgrace.
He's at the edge with nothin' left
as the devil seems to tempt.
He's been high for six days, only two hours slept.
No dope in his system. He's trippin' off the past.
Thought he was growing up slow, but now time's
going too fast.
The future came too quick
and homies flipped the script.
Time and time again, the truth's
what you make of it.
Missing his city and the streets he was raised on.
Tattoo on his chest should say "the city's most hated".
Still obligated 'til the day he is deceased.
Catch his shadow in the fire
with his khakis still creased.
The words he has spoken
may sound like fool's talk
but he's forever posted
with the homies on the block.

- K, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You're back, and writing epics again. Took you a while to get started. What a tragic creature you've created to star in your first big poem of the season. By the way, we hope your season in the hall is short and that your weather changes for the better.

My Mind's Eyes Can Now See

I'm starved from my freedom,
Left thinking a lot
But the more that I think
I get confused with each thought
So while I meditate with rhyme
I try to clear my mind
Thoughts to separate with time
Through the process I find
That I'm feelin' my thoughts
As I'm chasing my thoughts
I'm seizing my thoughts
As I'm replacing my thoughts
Just can't let this brain rot
When it's all that I got
It won't go to waste
Knowing there's so much to taste
While it's time that I face
So I'm setting my pace
It's more knowledge I chase
There's no better place
Than my thoughts
'Cause I'm free
My minds eye can now see
I'm stronger physically, currently
The road's now open, mentally
So being free I can now see my reality

-Bakgwai, San Francisco

From The Beat: You write that your brain is all you've got, as if that's something small. First, it's not all you've got (you have heart!), but even if it were, it's a huge gift that you seem to be taking full advantage of to create that reality that you see so clearly. Keep creating!

My Life is Nothing Compared to My Parents

What up Beat Within my name is Adrian. I am going to tell you about how my life is nothing compared to my parents.

My mom told me that my life was nothing like hers and Jefe. I did not want to believe it. She said that she had to work since she was 12 to right now, and so did my Jefe.

Me and my brother just ask for stuff without wondering if they had money or not. It came to the point where my dad got so depressed that we did not have that much money that he got into selling drugs. He was making lots of money, like $7,000 a day, that he would buy us anything. All that changed when he went to jail for 6 years. He got out and learned his lesson that making money the fast way was not good. So did we. We learned not to ask for a lot of things. I tell my mom that I am so sorry for doubting all my life.

-Adrian, Santa Clara

From the Beat: This is an honest and tough story. It challenges many of the ideas of the American Dream. Money may help us preserve the most important people and things to us, but quick money can be a real hazard. Hopefully all of us can pull away from that image of the quick fix.

Never a Right Time

Baby come here sit down let's talk I gotta lot to say.
So I guess I'll start by saying that "I love you."
You know this thing ain't been no walk in the park for me
I swear it will only take a minute.
You'll understand when I'm finished I don't want to see you cry.
Don't want to be the one to tell you lies
so how do you let it go when you,
you just don't know what's on the other side of the door when you're waling out.
Because all my thoughts just went out my head.
There's never a right time to say good bye, but we got to go our separate ways.

-Lil' Tim, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We think you've captured the difficult process of saying goodbye to someone we love beautifully here. It's never easy to tell people how we feel if we know it will cause them pain. You show here that the best way to share something hard is to tell the truth and be reassuring. Have you ever had to have this kind of conversation in person? Did you take your own advice?

Sad And Embarrassing

It's sad and embarrassing being stuck in a room. The only thing you have is a bed, desk, a toilet and walls, white walls, around you. All you can do is think.

What I do is just stare at the wall and think about what my mom, sisters, and Paco is doing.

I get mad at myself because it's my fault that I'm up in here. What I miss the most is my little sister. But what hurts me the most is knowing that I am a bad influence on my sisters.

I pray for my two younger sisters because I know they are following my bad steps and it makes me feel guilty. I'm sorry! But I know that when I get out I'm going to change to be better for my sisters and my wonderful mother. I had never realized how much I miss them and love them. No more locked doors!

Peace, I'm out

-Unique, Alameda

From The Beat: It's encouraging to hear you say these things, we hope you can stick by it! You are your sisters' role model, and if you can make a big change now, it will definitely have a positive impact on them.

My World

The world I live in is full of pain and sorrow.
Praying and dreaming for a better tomorrow
but my prayers are not answered
and my dreams are crushed
because the system I live in
is just way too screwed-up.
There's no way to control your fate.
You just live to fight and hate
and wait for the right chance
to keep your life straight.
Police and society try to put you down
for being Chicano and for being brown.
But I keep my head and I say screw this system
and screw these laws.
Screw the government.
I only believe in the 'cause'.
The evil lives within,
so my life is full of sin.
It lives within my soul
and that's why I feel so cold.
And I show no emotions and I shed no tears.
I show no remorse and I have no fears.
I've lived a screwed up life.
That's why my heart's like stone.
Happiness and kindness have all been thrown,
thrown away, far away – never to return.
The goodness within has all been burned.
The evil is done. There is no way to rewind it.
I'm searching for peace of mind.
I just can't seem to find it.
Searching for light in the darkness where I reside.
But all I seem to find is iniquity and violence.
But I guess it's all right
because after the violence
comes the silence.

-Isaac, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That's not the kind of silence you should settle for, Isaac. And what's "the cause", except another system? It's true, you can't rewind history and play it over again. But you can make a new history, a different kind of history. We like your rhymes, but we don't believe you have no fears, no emotions. You've been battered about a bit, but examine your past very carefully. If you do so honestly, you'll likely discover that your own choices have led you to this point in your life, along with forces that you truly couldn't control. Your job is to focus carefully on your options and to make the very best choices you can. The best choices will lead you in the best direction, one where happiness and fulfillment are possible. And your job is to nor give up. Blaming fate, or others, or 'the system' is convenient, but it doesn't solve your problems. By the way, our disagreement with your conclusions aside, you are a mighty fine writer.

Little Girl

Little girl, what are you doing?
Walking the streets?
You're just so young.
What? You think you're grown?
Fourteen years old and you know a lot,
got good shoulders and a good head.
So don't think he's nice when he buys you ice.
Hey, did you hear what I said?
Trust me, little girl, it'll cost you 'til you're dead.
He'll beat and you'll cry, tellin' cops another lie.
Pretty soon you'll won't want to live, you'll just want to die.
So little girl, this is the real world,
do you think you can handle it?
Because, trust me, it's not as easy as it looks.

-Angel, Marin

From The Beat: Amazing! Who, as the author, are you as the person watching this girl in the streets and giving her the excellent advice? Will this girl be able to hear and absorb what you tell her? What could give her the strength to be able to withstand the temptations the guy is trying to seduce her with?

La Vida Mía Y De Mi Padre

Bueno, lo primero que puedo decir sobre salir de este lugar. La verdad yo he estado mas de varias veces aqui. Lo primero que le puedo decir a una persona para que no regrese a este lugar es que primero que todo se acerque a Dios porque El es único camino sobre todo. El es primero. Tambien que trabajen legal, que no anden con malos amigos, no anden en pandillas, sobre todo lo más importante es apartarse de todo lo que es malo. Salir adelante por uno mismo. Pensar en el mañana, en un futuro, en una familia.

Hablando sobre la vida de mi padre, la verdad yo me siento mal cuando me recuerdo de la vida de el, porque se lo tanto que ha sufrido hasta la vez en este momento. Cuando pienso mucho, siento que me duele el alma. Mi padre trabajo por muchos años. Mi papa trabajaba todo el día y parte de noche y sin comer. Ni mi familia porque tal vez no le ajustaba la comida. Aveces se iba enfermo se iba a trabajar para que mis hermanos y yo salieramos adelante. A esta edad, que tengo, creo que si lo logro porque yo no tengo madre. El sufrimiento y el dolor me ha acompañado siempre.

Me he superado. Les digo que una cicatriz no se borra, se quedan los recuerdos, pero se superan.

Yo lo que les puedo aconsejar es que hay que aprovechar en todo momento y saber aprovechar las oportunidades. No hay que perderlas porque luego cuando se las pierden es muy tardes.

Yo tuve la oportunudad de haber llegado aqui a este pais. Y no me arrepiento de haber llegado. No hice lo que quiero pero he logrado algunos de los propósitos. Hay que pedirle a Dios sobre todos las cosas. Estar bien de salud y tener la vida. Espero que todo me siga bien. Que Dios no me desampare nunca y que siempre esté en mí.

From The Beat: Se nota demaciado que tu padre ha hecho un gran sacrificio para que salgan adelante. Vemos que no has cooperado con su efuerzo sino que has empeorado la situación. Tienes que darte cuenta de lo que estas haciendo. No es justo que tires a la basura todo el efuerzo de tu padre. Tienes un gran talento en como expresarte, usa tu inteligencia para tu propio bien y el de aquellos quenes han estado ahí por ti. Eres el único que puedes orgullecer a tu padre. Que Dios esté contigo.

My Life And My Dad's

Well, the first thing I want to say is about getting out of this place. The truth is that I have been here more than a few times. The thing I can tell someone so they won't come back is to look for God, because He is the only road of all. He is first, to work legally, not to hang up with bad friends, not to be in gangs, and what's more important is to get away from bad things. Succeed by yourself. Think about tomorrow, in a future, and a family.

Talking about my dad's life, the truth is that I feel bad when I think about his life because I know how much he has suffered and still suffering. When I think about him, it hurts my soul. My dad worked many years. He would work all day and part of the night without eating. My whole family and I couldn't eat because the food wasn't enough. Sometimes he would go to work sick in order for me and my brother to succeed. At this age I have, I think he made it, because he raised us without a mother. The suffering and pain has always been my companion.

I have succeeded. I say this to you: a scar can't be erased, the memories always stay but you can overcome them.

I advise you to take advantage from all moments, and to learn, to take advantage of the opportunities. Don't loose them, because once you loose it's too late.

I have the opportunities to come to this country and I don't regret it. I haven't made what I wanted, but I have accomplished a few of my goals. We have to ask God for every little thing. Thank Him to be healthy, and to be alive. I hope everything turn out good for me. I hope God doesn't stop supporting me and to have Him always in me.

-Elvin San Francisco

From The Beat: It's noticeable that your dad has done a big effort so you can succeed. But, you haven't cooperated with his effort but to make things worse. You need to realize what you are doing. It's not fair that throw away your father's effort. You have talents in expressing tour feelings. Use your intelligence for your own good and those who have always been there for you. You are the only one who can make your father proud. God be with you!

This Life

How is this thing true
They say it came out of the blue
Supposedly He can do what it wants to do
Don't believe what you can't see
To go to Heaven you earn the key
What Heaven and what key
And why should you have to pay a fee
When Heaven should be free
People call Him their father
Like if they're his son or daughter
To Him is why you pray
But when did he ever listen to what you say
He considers himself a boss
They say he helps the lost
But when has he helped me
Or my family
If people are gonna suffer on earth
Then why give us birth
So think what is life really worth?

-Cisco, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Amazing poem! Many people have doubts about religion, especially at this age, and your poem really speaks to the doubt many have about God. You should continue expressing these thoughts and asking these questions. No matter what, though, you know you can always count on yourself. That never changes!

Addressing My Alcohol Problem

'Sup Beat? I recently went to court and heard some straight bullshhh. Either I do two years in here or one and a half hears at the Y. If I get lucky, I'll just knock out two years here,

The only way I can do time in here is if the same substance abuse treatment in here can be similar to the same program at the Y. My public defender should be finding out if these services can come here. If they can't, I'ma have to go to the Y.

You see, I got a big-ass alcohol problem, and that's what causes me to do all the violent crimes I've committed. Now I have to pay the consequences for what I've done. I've stepped out of being in denial, and finally realized that I can't keep getting drunk or else I'll never get out of the system, you feel me?!

Whatever place I go, to I'ma be doing some years... For those who have serious cases also and are looking at the Y or prison, don't give up on yourselves! For real! It's never late to change... Late.

-Angel, San Francisco

From The Beat: You may have a "big-ass alcohol problem," like you wrote, but the fact that you are acknowledging the problem, and recognizing that unless you address it, you'll just keep ending up back in the system, means that you have taken a major step forward in battling this demon. We admire you for that, and for the advice you give about never giving up. Alcoholism is one of those "diseases" that can't be cured, so we hope you learn what you need to learn in order never to have to get drunk again. We hope you don't have to go the Y...

Panchito's History Of Drugs In The Tenderloin

In the 20s, 30s, and 40s, that's when the Afro-Americans and whites were running the drug trade. In the (San Francisco's) Tenderloin, where I was raised up, they were running the meat markets where they sell hamburger, steaks, chicken, and little extras, like heroin.

In the 50s is when all the immigrant people started coming to the Tenderloin—Filipinos, Latin people.

In the 60s, a lot of drugs started coming down—cocaine and heroin started coming in roughly into the Tenderloin.

In the 70s is when the Asians was beefin' with the Latinos, 'cause the Cubans were trying to take over the drug trade and the Asians wasn't having it.

In the 80s, gangbanging was popular and that and that's when it was on Asians, but not in the same neighborhoods--it was in different sets in the Tenderloin. The Filipinos were segregated because they didn't get along with the Laotians, Cambodians and Vietnamese gangs, and some Latinos, but some Latins was cool, though. They were in the Tenderloin Movement. Crack was popular in the 80s. Go to Golden Gate and Jones (streets) and see what it looks like. Does it look like heaven or hell?

In the 90s, when I was born, gangbanging was very popular. Gun use was highly used and that's when my generation was starting to come up. They had Boys and Girls Clubs, (but) they got hella boring right away.

In 2000, the police station opened on Eddy and Jones—that's when it started calming down a little bit in the neighborhood—maybe 5%. It's still booming, even though there's a police station a block and a half away from my 'hood, and it's still hectic.

Now we want to have more programs for the younger kids in our 'hood, so the young ones could be occupied during the day. We need recreational programs—sports, classes to teach us how to work, arts—painting, drawing. We got a swimming pool at the YMCA—it's not really nice but it's free.

-Panchito, San Francisco

From The Beat: Beautiful breakdown of how the drug culture evolved in the streets of the Tenderloin, where you are growing up. It sure would be nice if you took that courage, knowledge, talent and heart to help organize after-school, sports, any kind of programs for the young ones following you, to help them stay out of the game that destroys so many in the TL. It's a lot of work, but someone has to step up!

My Life

I remember a time when each day was long,
When the world was my playground and my life was a song
And I fluttered through years with barely a care,
Ignoring the future and what was there.
School was intriguing and filled with delights,
I played away days and dreamed away nights.
My parents assured me I had nothing to fear,
And no matter what happened, they'd always be near.
Little I knew of a world outside home,
Where tragedy, sorrow, and murder could roam.
All I saw were blue skies, rainbow, and stars.
I looked past destruction of buildings and cars.
As a child my biggest concern was just me;
I had to be happy, I had to be free.
And if I was content, I would not shed a tear,
Because look where I'm at sitting in here.
But as I grow up, darkness starts to set in;
My bright world has turned to concrete and tin.
I now see the violence I looked past before,
Friend and family die and my heart hits the floor.
Deadly diseases claim people I love.
There are landfills below me, and pollution above.
I often think back to when life was a game,
But no matter what happens it won't ever be the same.
There are days I just want to break down and howl,
To give up completely, to throw in the towel,
But I hold my head up high and push my way through.
I have too much to give and so much to do.
And I make a vow, that though it'll be hard,
I'll go on with a smile and play every card.
I'll give all I can, help others to love.
No matter what happens, love will bloom again,
And the strength I don't have will come from above.
So come on, take my hand, and through darkness we will sail,
But if we stick together, how can we fail?
Well remember to care, remember to feel,
And no matter what happens, our world we will heal.
So God bless you through many ways, through many days.
Love and much respect,

-Lucky Lokon, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a beautiful and insightful poem about how our perception of the world around us changes when we get older. But it sounds like you realize that we can't let these changing perspectives get us down. Your final words about needing to stick together remind us that we're in this together. What have you gotten through with others by your side? Thank you for this inspiring message of hope.

Story of My Life

Running from my past at high speed
never looking back
'cause when I do, my eyes bleed
smoke as much as my mind need
to feel high and freed from this life
I lead the last of a suicidal breed
feel nothing inside but greed
'cause the money and the way we rolled
made me cold after all the weight I sold
I ain't got nothing in my pocket
not a penny of profit
just a couple cases off it
it's a damn shame
gave all I had to the game
and it didn't do the same
the story of my life.
Much love to the homeboys who share situations with me:
Stay solid and keep it ill.

-Lonely, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a powerful, powerful piece that has a lot of sad wisdom. Your writing speaks as though you have been living for many years, even though you are so young.

Dear Dad

You have done everything as a parent but something went wrong. As a little girl I remember being "daddy's little girl".

As I grew older I became "daddy's little devil". I became a rebel. I still don't understand why.

But the best thing ever is that you never left my side. I went from good to bad and from bad to good, and you were still there, as if you were stuck to me. Always by myself, as I sit here in jail, I now understand.

The way you treated me wasn't bad, but I thought it was, and look at me now.

I'm in a place I know I don't belong. I wake up everyday thinking about that day that everything went wrong. I go to sleep every night praying to God to end all this soon. I don't know where my life's headed to, dad, but I hope it's not the tomb. I love you dad!

-Melissa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Lovely letter. What have you come to understand about your past? It's hard to believe you when you say you don't know what went wrong. Perhaps you're afraid to examine your past with the kind of honesty that would provide the clues you need. It could be painful. But if that's the price, the reward might be all that much sweeter. You don't have to tell us what went wrong, but you need to know for yourself – to avoid repeating it.

Read Between The Lines

The only thing you leave this life with is yo' memories
some of happiness and love, some with pain and misery.
Some say life's a bummer or a government conspiracy,
so they block it out with coke, weed, pills and Hennessy.
Anything they can do to drown out all the pain
so they take one mo' hit, pop one mo' pill, snort some cocaine.
Because it's hard to hope for sunshine, when you're standing in the rain.
Stuck in a place like this it's hard to stay sane
Tryin' to make us tame 'cause they already got us shackled
where if you do the wrong, you get an hour or you get tackled.
I'm baffled, shocked, in all kinds of surprise
this is not the place I want to be when I open my eyes.
Is it my own demise or someone doing these things?
Am I just a marionette and someone else is pulling the strings?
To a shred of hope I cling, prayin' to God that it never leaves me,
tell people I'm gonna do right but I guess nobody believes me.
Life makes me queasy, I'm feelin' sick to my stomach
I was told you can accomplish anything if you really want it
so I'm on it, I'll just give my life a spin,
if I ever get knocked down I'm gonna get up again.
'Cause if I don't succeed it's either death or the pen,
this is how the life that I lead has always been.
Tryna make it to heaven while I'm still livin' in sin.

Mankind's greatest gift and greatest curse is our minds.
Some are scared to look in theirs because of what they may find.
Some people are evil and some people are kind.

Nothing is what it looks like on the outside so read between the lines.
Read between the lines 'cause, read between the lines

God gave us two eyes so we have depth perception
so look out to see if someone's led you in the wrong direction,
'cause bad things get worse without any correction.
"Bad things don't happen to good people" is a common misconception,
because in this world nobody's life is ever perfect.
You'll work to get what you want if it's really worth it.
You know the old saying "easy come, easy go"
one day you're rich ballin', and the next day you po'
Girls will drop you like rain from the sky and this you know,
so keep your head up and go on a mission to get some mo'.
I'll take a rice bunny, sand, mud, dirt or even a snow –
'cause it's the person inside that matter, not the outside one that they show

Hold on 'cause, let me rewind before this gets all mushy
I've never been a punk, sucka, sissy or a wussy
'cause I've been raised from a puppy to a full grown K9
the best thing I've learned to do is read between the lines.

Mankind's greatest gift and greatest curse is our minds,
some are scared to look in theirs because of what they may find,
some people are evil and some people are kind
nothing is what it look like on the outside so read between the lines
Read between the lines 'cause, read between the lines

Read inbetween like it's some kind of code
believe half of what you see, even less of what you've been told.
Once you lose freedom of thought then your soul's been sold.
I'd rather die for people's freedom than live to be old,
live to be bold, screw living my life plain.
If you could hear my philosophy, you'd think I'm insane.
I'm an educated gang banger and a border line anarchist
because I feel this is a puppet democracy held by a ventriloquist.
If you ain't feelin' this go to the next page, read some other pieces
'cause I'm gonna preach for change until all the bullshhh ceases.
My thesis will probably bring some shhh to boil
I don't think we should fight for someone else's oil.
When there's a civil war happening on our own soil
all I feel is the recoil after my gun's blast.
Land of the free, ha, 'cause, don't make me laugh.
History repeats itself so take a look at the past:
They released our physical shackles, I wonder how long it will last.
This is the country whose motto is "all men are created equal"
then did a holocaust on the Native American people,
and passed laws that made racism and prejudice legal
How are we "one country, under god" if we're doing so much evil?
I'll leave it on that note until I write the next stanza:
You gotta read between the lines to see through all the propaganda.

Mankind's greatest gift and greatest curse is our minds,
some are scared to look in theirs because of what they may find
some people are evil and some people are kind
nothing is what it look like on the outside so read between the lines
Read between the lines 'cause, read between the lines

-T-Bone. Santa Clara

From The Beat: This poem is just downright amazing. We wish we could hear you on a stage in a room full of people performing that piece, maybe with someone beatboxing on another mic. Terrence, you are a brilliant writer. Get out of this place and become a star.

If you ain't feelin' this go to the next page,
read some other pieces
'cause I'm gonna preach for change until all the bullshhh ceases.

World Rap

When I grew up as a kid I never seen another race
But still in the world keeping up my pace
Now locked up with all other race each one with a different kind of case
We all wearing gray dressing the same every day
And all from the same area called the Bay
Most from different neighborhoods, some the same
But each and every one is stuck in the same game
Throwing up what they claim
Fighting for their fame
Trying to get more power
So they scream louder and louder
To make sure someone hear
But it was clear
That there was a pain inside he couldn't bear
It was like there was fear
Taken over him, scared to lose
So he had to win, but he was too weak so he had to choose Either use a shank or he had to lose
He can't decide so he looked for clues

-Chinese Kid, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're not sure what you meant when you told us not to publish this as a poem, because it clearly is a poem. We had to take out the last two lines because they named somebody in a way that was not appropriate. But we think there is a very important point in this poem, and that is despite all your differences — of race, of 'hood, of family — all of you are trying to be heard. We hope you continue to use The Beat to be heard, because some of the ways chosen lead to terrible consequences.

Thoughts In My Head

Life in a cell is a lot like being a dog, but not like a dog. We are people and we think. That's all I have to do in my cell is think — think of what I'm gonna do when I get out, think of what I did to get here. All I do is think what my friends are doing, what my girl is doing. Think from the morning 'til night.

My thoughts keep me busy, but at the same time, my thoughts make me wanna smash my head 'til I can't think no more. But that's the easy way out and I can't do that. Gotta do my time, and continue to live life. You're not living if you're not struggling. It's an everyday struggle. But I just live and let live.

-Tim-Tim, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you focus your painful thoughts on what you did to get here, then you'll be able to focus on what you need to do to stay out of here. Just thinking about those things, though, is not enough. You have to use what you're thinking to make a real plan of action for when you touch down, something you can follow day-by-day so that your steps lead you away from life in a cell and towards a better future.

Life Changed? Maybe Not

When they grew up, they used to fight a lot. The biggest change is violence, how kids used to fight, but now kids shoot one another. I say back then they couldn't vote, and now we can vote.

It is sort of the same as when they grew up, just different type of struggles. Back then, racism was the violence causing black deaths. But now it's black-on-black crime causing the deaths.

We face job challenges, like not getting jobs, and back then they couldn't get good jobs because racism. We face a even amount of struggles, just different types.

-Jr, San Francisco

From The Beat: Why do you think that in the old days, blacks were often the victim of white racism, whereas today, they are more likely to be the victim of violence at the hands of other blacks? If things have changed that much, how much more do you think they will change in another 25 years?

My Grandma's My Parent

Wha's up wit' it Beat? It's ya boy Shawny Bo. I'm still in here keeping it chello. But to the topic, is my life is easier than my parents? I never really knew my pops, so I don't know how hard it was for him. All I know is what I heard about him.

I had a step pops, and my life harder than his, but it's better than that ninja. Shhh, I get way mo' money than him, and we both work for these white girls except mines better. Ha, ha.

But on the real, I consider my grandma my parent, and I think she has a harder life me because she was with me through everything, and everything I been through ain't coo'. When I got shot, just her and my brother came to the hospital. I know it hurt her to see me go through everything in them grimy-ass streets of Richmond, so she probably has a harder life.

But I wanna change that.

-Shawny Bo, San Francisco

From The Beat: We took out how you make your money because we think it's one of the weakest ways there is, and one which we don't want to promote. It sounds like you owe your grandma a lot, but we're not sure you're thinking about how to pay her back as much as you're thinking about your own desires. Sometimes, growing up means sacrificing our own wants to make someone else's life better. For your grandma's sake, we hope you start thinking along those lines.

When I Go Home

From day one to day two, the world has changed for me. When I was little, I never used to get in trouble a lot. I mean, I used to steal from stores, candies, toys, little things. But now stuff is getting worse.

I'm starting to rob people, feel me. I started seeing how jail was. I started being around the wrong people, getting influenced, seeing how much money they coming up on.

After the first time I did it, I went to jail, always said I wasn't coming back from the first time. But that's what everybody say. This time when I get out, I'm planning on not saying nothing, just doing "me."

Jail is getting old. It's time for me to go back to school and get my life right.

All right then, Beat.

-Gat, San Francisco

From The Beat: Jail is not the only thing that's getting old. So are you, so you're right, it's time for you to go back to school and get your life right. This is a lousy place to spend time, so let this be the last time!

Gang Banging

What's up with The Beat. It's Grimy talking about what gang banging is really about. I'm going to let you know gang banging is just like war. Why I say that is because you fight for a cause. It could be any cause that you are representing. It could be fighting for your block.

I fight for my block. that's what I do. One other thing that gang bang really comes down to is prison or six feet deep. You really can't get nothing good out of gang bang except respect from the homie. But really, that's all. It really matter to me unless my life change, but I doubt it. Chea until next time late.

-Grimy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you're right, Grimy, gang banging is just like war, and — to us — just as meaningless. Young soldiers go to war to fight for the causes of old men who never go to war themselves. (George Bush sends boys into battle to die for oil, but calls it a "great cause.") You go to war for shot-callers who told you what "the cause" is that you're in jail for. Only the soldiers can change this endless human activity by refusing to be brain-washed into doing what they've been taught to do as children. You are wrong to doubt that you will change. You WILL change; the only question is whether the change will the what you want it to be or what someone else wants it to be.

Anything Can Happen Here

Almost every day I been in this place, I seen people in and out. Sometimes, I seen the same people come back. Some are happy or don't care that they're back.

But I know people that either been here as long as me or longer know that they're going to stay out, including me.

For the person who takes my place when I get out, you will find out why this place is not the place to be. One of the reasons, especially for new people, is that if you from the wrong place you will get jumped. I seen it happen. And even if you not from anything, my advice is not to come to YGC thinking that you're a big dog, and all the shhh. Just go in there and do your time. Don't start shhh. You should be cool.

But then, no promises. Anything happens here, which is why you shouldn't come here in the first place.

-Reese, San Francisco

From The Beat: So, the question we have is what are you planning to do on the outs that will keep you from following someone else back into the box? You give excellent advice, so we'd like to know how you plan to apply it to your own life.

Harder Than For My Parents

What up Beat? This ya boy Lil' Bra. and I think my life is harder than my parents' life. When my parents was growing up, my parents never felt how it felt to live in fear, dodge bullets, feel how it feels to be slaves locked up. My parents never felt how it feel to be in the system. I never graduated from middle school.

-London, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, the things you've suffered do seem worse than what your parents experienced. But how hard it must be for them to see what all this is doing to their son, the love of their lives! If you have kids, will your life be harder or easier than theirs?

When I'm Away

When I'm away I'd like to think I'm missed
but I know as time goes on I become the forgotten.
The letters stop coming and the visits are non-existent.
That alone could break the weak,
but I'm headstrong.
My mind is solid.
I spend my days and nights reforming myself and trying to educate myself
in any way I can – 'cause you ain't a real g if you ain't educated.

-Lonely, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a really strong piece for recognizing the pain of being locked up has a lot to do with your psychological state. You're a great and articulate writer Lonely.

The World

What I see in my eyes or cries over people who die.
The world I see is full of poverty
So please wake me when I'm free.
I cannot bear captivity
Where I'm told my race holds no significance
I wither and die in ignorance
I pray to the day that they set me free
Till I can see the world
For what it is

-Lil' Momo

From The Beat: Don't be a victim – you have the power to teach yourself, to show the significance of who you are, and to raise yourself up out of poverty. Put that powerful mind of yours to work and tell The Beat how you plan to do it!

A New Me

Life is going to change for me because I'm gonna follow the right path to what I need to succeed in life. I'm gonna do what I need to do not be back in juvenile hall. When I get out of juvenile, my life is gonna be completely different.

Every day since I been in here, I've been thinking, "Am I ever gonna see the other side any sooner?" I've been thinking what my parents are thinking of me right now. My life is gonna change by me not having people look at me as a failure or something that I'm not. Life is gonna be different for me. I'm tryna do what I need to see the other side, my friends and family.

My life is harder then my parents because my mom and dad loves me and they do things that I need in life. Sometimes it feels like my life is harder because I'm younger and I'm doing things that my parents may not have did. My life is harder it seems because my mom told me stories when she was coming up. The things her parents made her do that made her who she is now.

The difference between my life growing up and hers is that my life is worse. I'm sitting in juvenile hall. While my mom was a kid she was having fun doing things a kid does, and now my childhood is ruined all over nothing. There aren't a lot of things that remain the same because she never was in juvenile as a kid and I am for the first time.

Most things remain the same, like my mom had her time to be a kid and now I have my time to be a kid, but not how I want it to be. I never wanted to be in juvenile and have to eat when they say eat and take a shower when they say so.

The day I get out of here I'm gonna be a new person. No more hanging out late or being the old me. I'm not tryna be in here again and ruin my life.

-YG, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're glad you've decided that your first trip to juvenile hall will also be your last trip here. For some people, it takes a lot longer than that to make the changes you say you're going to make. We wish you had given a few more examples, though, if just what you plan to change. You won't be hanging out late, but what else will be different? You say your childhood is "ruined" over "nothing." What do you mean by "nothing?" Whatever that nothing was, it led you here, so maybe you should rethink the meaning of nothing, and when you get out of here, don't forget the promises you make in this piece.

Family Is Everything

I am thankful for having a brother and two beautiful sisters in my life. I wouldn't know what to do without them. They help me in every way possible. I look up to my sisters. They are positive role models to my lil' bro and I. This all happens with our wonderful mother, who has been there by our sides through whatever and whenever. She supports me to the fullest. It just hurts to have me in here and he struggling out there.

I need to step it up when I get out this time and I truly mean it. I'm growing up and things need to change. I'm looking forward to being out in 180 days. Miss my family much and my dad Hermen has done a lot for me throughout the years; he has been there for me. Love them all very much. Thank you for being there family. I love my cousin Nessa. Just remember: Live life to the fullest, like every day's your last because tomorrow's never promised to anyone, family. Turn that frown upside down. Miss and love my folks.

-Ira, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Ira, this is a beautiful piece. We can tell you love your family very much. This kind of thankful piece reminds us of what's important in life. What will you say to them when you get out? How can YOU be a role model to your lil' bro? Thanks for sharing!

The Next Person To Occupy My Cell

The four walls you look at when you wake up in the morning at Juvenile life is not cool. It's boring. You do the same thing every day bein' in a small room you could barley walk in. You only got a mirror, a bathroom and a sink.

I'm tired of this. You gain knowledge in the room because you think and think about how you're gonna change your life and not come back, like going to school and get a job. Have stuff to do instead of doing nothing like you do in your cell.

-Michaelo, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like you've learned a few things about being here that you really don't like, and don't want to repeat. So, do you plan to follow your own advice to go to school (every day), and let that be your ticket to a job and a life that doesn't include lock-up?

If

If I had a chance, would I change my ways
before my life crumbled,
or would I continue to dance with fire
and end up with nothing?
Will I choose kindness, or will I stick
with my old threadbare ways?
I want a better future.
I want a family. I want laughter
for the many years to come.

-Todd, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Beautiful poem and great questions. The answer is: don't stick to those threadbare ways. The answer is: go after what you want.

I Really Wanna Change

What's good with The Beat? This the young ninja Young Dunny. I'm up in here chillin', doin' me. But the DA tryin' to play me on some other shhh, tryin' to get a ninja shipped to that jail thang, and I ain't with it.

They done set a ninja court back to June 3 on some other shhh, but I can't do shhh but go on instincts. The only way I'ma get out is if I get lucky. But I'm hoppin' on hella letters of recommendation 'cause they talking 'bout I'm a threat to society over a punk-ass high-speed chase, and didn't nobody get hurt.

Then they like if I stay in juvenile court. My public defender tryin' to send me back to the Mills and the DA tryin' to YA a ninja. So I'm networking, getting ready for the next challenge. But I feel like I'm going the wrong way. I got a lot of shhh I gotta do.

I been in and out of this place since I was barely a teen, and they really ain't doin' shhh to keep me out this shhh. They should've did something to keep me out when I was young. Now it almost like its too much shhh in the way.

I'm finna be 18 in about three months, and now I really wanna change and they finna make me do some more dumb shhh.

-Young Dunny, San Francisco

From The Beat: What does "threat to society" mean to you? If you led the police on a high-speed chase, weren't you putting a lot of people's lives in danger besides your own. Even though nobody got hurt, if you had crashed and killed a child, would that automatically make you a threat to society? Is it the results or the behavior that threatens people? Do you think there should be any consequences at all, and if you do, what should they be? What do you think the system should have done for you to keep you out when you were younger that they failed to do? What was your responsibility in all this to keep yourself out? It may be harder now that you're older, but if you really want to switch things up, you can. We know people in much more serious trouble, for much longer, who are much older who made the decision to do things differently, and it has paid off in their lives. It can it yours, too.

What Happened To My Son

Being locked up just ain't no fun. My dad looks at me and says:

"What happened to my son – he's locked up, behind bars while I'm out driving fast cars. I can't see his face everyday. I go to church and sit down and pray. I remember when he was just a kid. He used to play games, but not like this. Getting in trouble with the system. Not just me, but my whole family, misses him. Where did I go wrong raising him? I wanted him to have a good education. Is it just because he's brown that the cops be hatin'? I want him to have fun, but not with Satan. I want him to do good. That's all I ask. Just for him to do good tasks. He's living in pain. Please God, can you save him?"

-Salad, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Your dad's son is going to have to save himself. He can start by choosing his playing partnes more wisely. We don't know much about that Satan fellow. Sounds to us like the kind of guy who urges others to do his dirty work and then watches as they pay the consequences. We love the way you've set up your piece – looking at yourself through your dad's eyes. Very clever. So clever we know you're more than capable of weighing your decisions and choosing more wisely.

Still Bored, But Happy

I always find myself thinking, life's so great! I feel no matter how hard times may look, life is always going to be good! It might just be because I'm young and at the moment don't have to deal with anything. But at least I'm happy.

Just like there are ups and many downs in life, there are pains and many pleasures. There's always different possibilities to look at 'em. So, as I am young, spending my time in here to better myself will keep me occupied and keep my mind off wanting to get out, although that always seems to be there.

I will not take this as a loss. In fact, I've won. I have taken paths to make my future look brighter than it was looking before. I have definitely opened my eyes. My only wish would be for everybody that is going through difficult times — mentally, emotionally, physically, financially, relationship-wise, etc. — is that whoever will look to the better side of their situations because I want everyone to be happy.

Our lives are short, so better to live 'em successful, happy and productive towards our kids' future. But those three things may always contradict each other, so don't trip and keep your heads up toward the one you want most.

-Bakgwai, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't know where you get your indomitable spirit, but it's infectious. Having a positive outlook, as we've said before, is one of the essential ingredients to a positive life. We think you're is going to be warm and bright, just like you.

Fire Inside

I feel like I've got fire burning inside me.
Living on this fast lane of a dead end road.
No time to sleep because the 5-0 trying to creep.
They've been trying to clean us off the streets
but there's still no peace in my city.
For centuries they've been sending us
away to penitentiary.
Take a chance and step into these gardens
where there is no kindness,
just people lost in madness.

-Tuffy, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Powerful poem T. - Maybe it's time to plant flowers in your garden./ Maybe it's time to harvest a bit of kindness./ Maybe it's time to lead folks out of the madness.

The days that I don't want to go home

There was a time just before I got locked up that I didn't want to go home.

I got pulled over when I was driving home and the cops were looking for me which is another long story, but they said I was under arrest and to put my hands behind my back and spread my legs.

At that point I ran on foot and was on the run for an hour before I got picked up by a friend. I was hiding out for two weeks and didn't want to go home because my parents would be really pissed at me so two weeks went by, then the police sent a warrant in the mail for me so I turned myself in after two weeks. Now I'm sitting here.

-Stark, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's often when we're in trouble that we fear facing those we love. Why do you think this is? What do you think your parents would have said to you if you had gone home? Is it ever worth braving others' anger during stressful times? Can their lectures ever help us?

My life is easier than my father's

My life is easier than my father's life. My father used to tell me that when he was growing up, his parents were never there and never cared about him. They never bought him school clothes and they never gave him lunch money.

He told me he had to rob people and sell drugs to get money. The money he was getting, someone kept stealing, so he left home. He said he started robbing banks and stores and selling drugs, then stashing his money at his girlfriend's house so that none of his family members could steal it. He said his parents started doing drugs and beating on him, so he stopped going for good.

As he got older he started getting more money, but the police started harassing him and after a long time he got caught.

My life is way easier than my father's. My parents are always there for me and give me whatever I need/want. They love me and I love them, and love is something my father never had.

- Lionel, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you for this very personal story, Lionel. We're glad that you have such loving parents. Please pass that love on, to your kids, back to your parents, and to your community. We can't go back in time and change your father's life when he was young, but from now on we can do our best to make sure less people go through what he did.

Changing

Just know they can't
Keep you in here forever.
At some point you will see the sky
At some point you will get out
At some point you will be free.
But what happens next?
At some point you will have to change.
At some point you will have to wake up
And realize you can't play with this?
You can't come back
You need to grow up, wake up
And stay up. Stop falling behind
The walls, these ugly clothes,
This county food.
Just stay strong and know they
Can't keep you in here forever

-Lizzie, Alameda

From The Beat: So Lizzie, what will happen to you when you are free? What will help you "grow up, wake up, and stay up"?

Searching, Searching For My Baby

I seem to have you in my mind
I've had dreams of us running through grape vines.
Yet I could never see your lovely face,
I try so hard, sometimes I feel like a spy solving a mystery case.
All I know is that you're out there somewhere.
I don't even know you, yet I seem to care.
Why is it taking me a long time to find you?
Please Father, oh heavenly Father, send me some sort of clue.
I feel my life with you will be a lot better,
But that can't start till the day we're together.
In my dreams we seem to have the best time,
It's been a while since my dark cave began to shine.
That's how I know you're truly the one for me,
I just hope this is how my life is supposed to be.
Please, please help me find a new life,
Or guide me to my future wife.
I wake up every morning thinking to myself "where could you be?"
I'll wander this lonely world till the day you set me free.
"I know you're out there somewhere wondering this world and I won't stop till the day we meet. I hope while I dream of you, you dream of me. These walls may have my body, but they will never imprison my soul. You know they say God took a rib out of Adam to make Eve. So darling, I need you by my side, because I feel crippled without my rib."

-Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing such an emotional poem. We feel you've truly and deeply captured that feeling that there is some destiny out there waiting for you, if you could only find it. Feelings of being stuck or lonely can often make us think of what's "out there," what the world has in store for us. Do you think we can we take hold of our destinies, instead of just waiting for them to arrive? Should we put all of our power in fate, or take control of our futures ourselves?

This Mission

Mission
My mission
My mission impossible
Gone
Growing
Grown
What I called myself through
Them obstacles, these trials, this shhh you
Put me through.

Ma, mom, mother
My sister, my brother
They get to call, crawl, cry out to you.

How dare you tell me pain has impacted
Your heart more than mine.

The sorrow, my childhood
My womanhood divine
I needed you, depended on you
Yet you cared only to let me down
From 12 till 19. It's still
Certain that I am damned.

Lost into wilderness, they call me
Mainee, gutta, mommy,
Mission
My mission, help make it impossible.

-Erica, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this poem. It leaves us with many questions about your life and experiences, not to mention the relationship you have with person you are writing this poem to.

My Life Is Harder

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Mike writing again. I'ma write about this topic I like.

My life coming up was harder than my parents'. Don't get me wrong, their lives were hard, but mine is harder. My parents never got shot at or shot. They never seen nobody get killed. They didn't lose no homies to the game. They never been locked up.

I got this shhh bad, yo. Ninjas want my head, yo, but I ain't trippin'. I can't complain, though, 'cause I chose this life. My life could have been all cookies and cream, feel me, but I chose the hard-ass shhh.

Shhh go change real soon, so don't worry about nothing. Keep y'all head up and ride this time out. I'll holla at y'all next week.

-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: So if you chose this life, as you say, what's keeping you from choosing something else for a better life? And why do you think things have changed so radically from the time your parents were coming up (without shooting or being shot at) to your time where so many guns solve problems that people used to have the courage to face without weapons? Is your generation more cowardly than the one that went before?

Just Another Day

Losing a homie is like losing a brother, you feel pain as your mind twists and goes insane. The feeling is as someone just got done cutting your veins. The anger takes to a different level, a different point of mind, you don't know what you got until you lose it. Once it's gone, it's never coming back. It's not like jail, you get out sooner or later, but when they take one of mine my anger wants to release and take three of them. It's just what I got inside my chest, don't know what it is but it hurts. At some point, shutting my feelings with anger, with pain, but who should I blame? Knowing that you ain't here no more, makes me wanna blow the whole damn world. Y'all don't know what we go there, only what you read, well keep reading.

- My Pain, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You express the feelings of losing a friend honestly and eloquently here. It's good that you recognize the different emotions that come on during this experience, including anger and feeling insane. How can knowing these emotions help you control them, so that you don't make the same problem for someone else?

Growing Up

It's been over six months and it still brings me tears
I was so in love the day you walked away
And it still hurts inside every night when I pray
Yet I wait every day knowing you're not by my side
'Cause the love I have is the reason why
My heart's been bleeding, the pain in my eyes
How do I show you're all I fantasize?
The only happiness I feel is in my dreams
Holding each other close like we were teens
Now I look for the sun but it's raining today
Tell me why this feeling inside is my only vibe
To keep me growing up. For you're the one who kept my head up.
Forever in my heart that's where you'll always be
Even if you're with someone that's just not me

-Ly, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We all have people in our lives like this right? People who change your life yet might no longer be in it. Although it may be painful, we can at least be grateful for the fact that they were in our lives in the first place. It may be hard to imagine now but this person will not be the last person to love you or the last person you'll love. Realizing that is also part of growing up. First things first, take care of you on this next journey.

Only God Can Judge Me

Perhaps I stay blind to the fact
Stabbed in the back
I couldn't trust my own woman just to punch dirty facts
Well I succeed, paranoid from the weed
I hope to look and I hope to focus, but I can't see
In my mind I'm a blind man doing time.
Look to my future it's my past that's all behind
Is it a crime to fight for what is mine?
Every body dying
Tell me what's the use of trying
I've been trapped since birth
Cautious 'cause I'm cursed
And fantasies of my family and it hurt
An they say it's the white man I should fear
But it's my own kind doing all the killing here
I can't lie ain't no love fo' the other side.
Jealousy inside and make them wish I died
O my lord tell me what I'm lookin' for
Everybody drunk and got me knocking on heaven's door
And all my memories of seeing brothers bleed
And everybody agrees but still nobody see
Acting like ya hurt don't get caught up in the mix
'Cause the maze is full of dirty tricks,
Only God can judge me

-Magnificent, Alameda

From The Beat: We really appreciate what you're laying down here. You got some phrases that are so tight, "everybody dying/tell me what's the use of trying," "trapped since birth/cautious cause I'm cursed." We wondered about "only god can judge me" at the end, b/c the phrase is sort of clunky at the end and is less connected to the rest piece in rhyme, rhythm, etc. But that is such a small concern compared to all that's going for this, the images that really evoke your experience so it's like we can feel it too as we read: "paranoid from the weed," "blind man doing time" and "seeing brothers bleed." This is what good writing does, helps the reader feel like s/he feels some piece of it with you. What you are doing is making art from pain, and that is a transformation that gives you a new sort of power. You inspire us.

Parents' Lives Easier

When it comes to whose lives have been more harder, when it comes to parents, I would say my life has been more difficult. The reason why I think my life is more complex is because more teenagers nowadays is dying from guns and knives.

Many people in the old times never had to worry about people shooting many people. They just were willing to resort to fighting. Not saying that is good, but it beats ever pulling a trigger.

-Mitchell, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's a tragedy that so many problems these days get "settled" with weapons, leaving so many mothers weeping for their lost sons. Do you think the next generation's lives will be even harder than yours?

No More Repeats

It seem like every time I look up, the time keep counting down. And every time I'm on top, I'm headed back southbound. I been through this shhh before. Now I'm on a repeat.

I'm almost 18. I ain't going for a three-peat. I saw the world changing, I said I'd never change up, but as time went on, I felt time was gone. Didn't wanna waste months of my life in a cell for doing wrong.

-Fresh, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate what you're saying, Fresh. When we're children, we always think we'll never change our way of thinking. But as we gain experience, good and bad, we do change. So tell us, what specific things are you planning to do (and not do) to make sure this is your last repeat here?

No One To Blame But Myself

Why is it that every night I cry,
I sometimes think what if I die?
It seems that all I see is people in pain
I mean what do I have to gain
Now it seems I'm all cried out
Wondering what life is all about
I know I put myself in these chains
So I don't really have anyone to blame
It's like my life is drifting apart
I mean who cares if I struck myself with a dart
It's not like anyone feels my pain hiding in my heart
But why me God, why me
I truly hope this isn't what I'm destined to be
Am asking you to guide me in my way to my true journey
Because right now I feel so blind
It's like the devils playing tricks with my mind
It's like my body's stuck as a slave
I don't know why I still act so brave
I once had a dream I had a knife
Stuck it in my chest and took my own life
There's times I sit and just think about death
Tomorrow's not promised so every day am taking my last breath
Is this the truth or am I living lies
Thinking about this while I dry away tears from my eyes
I walk as if my whole body is drain
I sit and think while I cut my vein
With thoughts of what I had to gain
I mean who did I have to blame

-Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What a powerful poem! Your suffering and strength are clear to us in the poem. Although you may feel lost and alone, remember that you're not. Being locked up is tough but it's not the end of the road. You have your whole life ahead of you and with talents like this, you could do a lot. Don't lose hope, no matter what!

Be Good

When I was little my mom and sister used to tell me to behave and be good.
My brother was on drugs and he was in a gang from the 'hood.
He went to juvi and made mom cry.
And sometimes made mom stay up all night.
I told my mom that I was going to be good, but I didn't really understand.
My brother was so bad, and I was so mad because he made momma sad.
Sometimes he was good, and he brought home money from the hood.
Mom send him to U.S.A. and he did obey.
Now he has a family, that's so good.
But sadly, he left the hood.
Now is my turn and I did something wrong.
Now I am in juvenile, I haven't seen mom smile In awhile.
But I let my mind go wild.
So please god be cool, I promise you I'll be good.
Now I will leave the 'hood.
Mom and sister was true and now I have a clue.
Mom, sorry.
I didn't know you was worried.
I will get out of juvenile, and I will make you smile.
I will make my way to the top without getting popped.
I'll be good.

-Willis, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a really great poem. Sounds like you do a lot of the same stuff your brother used to do. This is your chance to see that. and since you know you don't want to hurt your mom and sister anymore you don't have to! You can stop the dangerous stuff you're doing and be there for your family.

Hard Life

My life is hard.
Everyday is a struggle.
Trying to survive, I strive for the good in life.
Jail considers you as a criminal, I wanna be considered original.
Don't look at me different 'cause I'm locked behind doors.
I might be your neighbor, you might pay me to sweep and clean.
I'm normal like you.
Felonies and misdemeanors ain't a thing.
I didn't ask to be judged, just like you I'm a queen.
I ain't about to use big words, I'm just gon' say thank you.
Please is if I respect you.
I need some food and soda to drink, somebody need to escape me from here please.

-Brianna, Alameda

From The Beat: Yes you are a queen, Brianna! But in this poem, I don't hear you taking responsibility for your actions. What can you do in your life to make sure that people don't see you as a criminal? In the end it's up to you...

Is Life Easier – Or Harder?

Man, back in the day
Ain't like it is today
Back then was then
Was about the pimp game
Now we get it off 'caine
Back then you saw someone from the shoulders
Now ninjas get active and fold ya
Ninjas is spooked out the ass, so everyone got the gun
Ninjas with the shhh like to have fun
Back in the day ain't like it is today
And that's all I gotta say

-Joe Dirt, San Francisco

From The Beat: You say a whole lot in this tight little poem. It sounds like, from your viewpoint, things are just getting worse and worse. Do you see any light at the end of this tunnel? What would change this picture for the better? Do you think the fact that so many young people are strapped is making things as bad as they are, or are there other reasons too?

Easier Or Harder

My mom tells me a lot about her life, how she had to spend her young life without a dad and mother and not a lot of loved ones. My mom had to go through life without much to wear, eat, or money to spend. Compared to mine it's a lot easier for me because I have the things I need and if I needed money I always can ask my mom, and always she gives it to me. So I think my life is a lot easier than my mom because life now is easy to make money I always can ask my mom, and like always she gives it to me. So I think my life is a lot easier than my mom because now it's easy to make money but it takes a lot of work, but back in the day it was hard to make money and a lot harder work.

My mom was a harder love 'cause before it was harder for her to get money and now it's still hard for her to get money and going through life taking care of six of her kids by herself and with not much support.

So for my life compared to my mother was easier, and the life for my mother was a lot harder than my own life.

-R, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You seem to have a great respect for the work your mom put into your life and everyone's in your family. Hopefully you can stand with her to take on a little of the burden in the future.

Running Wild, Running High

Hey Beat! I'm back in here! I'm not happy about it. But here's my story…

When I was a young teeen I went on the run for 8 months. I was on probation and I got pulled over with weed. So I thought that I was gonna go back in. Even though I was gonna go back in, I just said 'screw it' and went on the run.

I was staying with two of my homies. I would break into houses for money. I would get a lot of stuff. I had money so the first thing I thought about was drugs and getting my high. I would smoke dank and drink.

Later I started using cocaine and meth. I remember myself being skinny, very skinny. I wouldn't eat, for a long time like 6 months I was like this.

I was on the run for Mother's Day and I'm pretty sure my mom was sad.

I was on the run for my 15th birthday. I was on the run for my little brother's birthday.

I remember I would be out like 3-4 o'clock in the morning just all doped out. I wouldn't sleep, I would be paranoid all the time looking over my shoulder just in case any cops try pulling me over.

I got in a couple fights; I got jumped twice. I was crazy but I experienced a lot of things. I think it's not a good thing to go on the run but now that I did it I experienced a lot.

Now that I'm a little older I think it's good that I did it when I was young. It opened my eyes a little bit. I got a little wiser, so now I think it's not worth it going on the run because you miss out a lot in life. You don't see your little brother or sister grow up. You don't see your mom. During all that time I think I could've done good and made my mom smile. But screw it I can't take that time back. I don't regret it because I'm not going to do it again. At least I did it when I was young, now that I'm older I just chill.

Oh yea well I got caught in November and only did one-month hall time. I was out six days before Christmas. I spent it with my family and that's all I wanted to do for a long time.

Well that's all for this time. Much love to all. Stay up. Alrato.

- Victor, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wise advice Victor. Although being on the run can be fun and there are many things you can learn about yourself, you miss out on a lot simply by not being at home. Do you hope that young people who are thinking of doing on the run will take your advice? What else would you tell them?

Dreams (part 2)

Hey Beat, well I'm going to finish my dream. Well, I had a crazy dream it was hella scary 'cause I came back to my room I fell asleep, and into a deep sleep it was hella crazy 'cause at first I was dreaming I was dying and my homeboy Dopey was in my cell.

I asked him if I was dead and he said look at your body. I looked and said how did I die? And he told me that I was in a coma.

I said, look G, I hate life. I close my eyes and see your face, you're dead and every day I dream of you and he told me you think you're crazy? Am I going crazy every time I see you fight? I get mad, what do you know how I feel? I'm dead, I put up with my mom crying everyday because I'm dead.

Man, if my baby could just see me and I could just hold him do you know what I would do?

I told him back: Do you know what I would do just to be dead man? Can't you see I don't give a shhh. I got a tattoo on me and I'm only 15. I had it since you died because you are my only familia and people say I'm 5051, but I don't give a shhh what they say because I'm a savage and every time I run on them they punk. I ain't got no reason in this life if I can I will let you live my life.

He said lil Savage, I know what you going through, but I want you to be someone I never could be. I ask him what's that, he said a man. I told him I am a man, he said not just a man, a man that can take care of his familia. Be there for them and be the dad that you and I never had.

I'm with you ever time you step I said you're a fool 'cause I ain't going to have a baby in my whole life, I'll be dead or in prison. He said why do you think like that? You don't think girl loves you and your green eyes?

Man I wish I was still alive because if I was not dead you would not be thinking like that.

Well, check this out. Since you say you're a man of your word, than why are you locked up and not out there? Take care of my familia. When I got shot you said you will always be there for my son and his mom and our mom. What happened? I said man I just can't take it there hella haters out there. He said and you're letting them get to you?

I told him…yeah.

He said man, didn't I teach you better than that? Yeah they win if they get to you, so don't let then get to you.

I told him, yeah I know, but he said there ain't no buts if you get a name put on you don't go by the name Estevan Savage is your real name. Yeah I know its hard, but do something with your life.

I asked him, is there really a God and he said he just roams the world than I woke up to get a letter under my door from his baby's mama and his son. Everyday, I ask myself was I tripping or did that really happen? I mean, I know I got PTSD bust was it some kind of hint or something? I see him every time I close my eyes, but its not him wearing his clothes with blood all over him and bullet holes.

Well, Beat this Lil Savage got to go, but to all that know me, stay up.

-Lil' S, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What an amazing and powerful dream. Many people believe that when our loved ones pass on they watch over us and try to guide us in the right direction. We don't think it matters much if it was real or just a dream. The meaning in this story is so deep and valuable that it is important wherever is came from. Have you remembered what he said to you, has it changed your outlook on your life or behavior? We think that our experiences themselves are not as important as the effect that those experiences have on ourselves. What deep or long-term effect did or will this have on you? Thank you for sharing and giving you story the chance to affect others' lives too.

Oldies but Goodies

Lets just kiss and say goodbye
I'm-a miss you I can't lie
Baby what happened to always and forever
Never say never
Smile now cry later
It was me and you
But maybe someday I'll find a way without you
It's gonna take a miracle to make me love someone new
Foolish little girl, you didn't want me when I wanted you
Now I'm wishing on a star
To follow where you are
I'm still a young man baby, oh baby, my angel baby
You said you loved me
It seems to me I heard these words before
Somebody please
Hold me, walk with me
Because am tell it like it is
There will be no one else for me
Make up to break up is all we do
But darling baby I can't carry on without you

-Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We love seeing all these old song titles together. It's fascinating to take something out of its original context and look at it another way. These titles together give a good look at the many complicated faces and feelings of love. Which of these have you experienced? Which do you hope to experience someday?

The Next Person To Occupy My Cell

I hope you feel bad about being here, 'cause it's not the place for anyone to be. You should want to be at home with your parents right now and be thinking about why and how you got here in this place where you have no freedom and nobody to talk to. I hope you take this as a life lesson to get your life on the track to success.

-J-Bear, Alameda

From The Beat: That is really tough to hear, but some good advice. Are these things that you think about a lot? What is the life lesson you've taken from this experience? Hopefully you can take your own advice!

Bill Clinton Really Wants To Be President Again

I think Hillary Clinton's husband (former US President Bill Clinton) thinks she should drop out (of the race for the Democratic nomination for President) because he ain't supporting her and her campaign for the presidency because he doesn't think she should be President, he thinks he should be President again.

If she becomes President, he's gonna do all the work and he doesn't want to do all the work. She's gonna make him do all the campaign stuff and if she becomes President, which I think she won't, she'll make him do all the recognitions stuff, write all the bills, make laws happen. When they wanna make a law, they go to the Congress and if the Congress doesn't think it's (the bill's) good enough to read, then they just throw it away. If it is good enough for her to read, she'll tell her husband to read it and do what he thinks is right. He's probably not gonna read it, he's probably just gonna put a "Yes, that should be a law" on it. She doesn't want to do all that work. I think she wants to give her husband another chance (to be President.)

-Young Clinton Obama McCain, Marin

From The Beat: You may be at least partly right. Bill Clinton hasn't been showing up while Hillary's been giving campaign speeches on TV recently, has he? Do you think she told him to stay home? If you could vote, who would you choose to be the next President of the US? Hillary? Bill? Barack Obama? John Mc Cain? Why?

Incarceration, Part 1

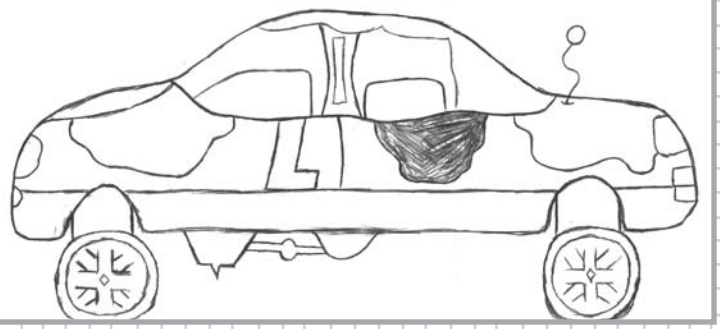
Incarceration ain' no joke, it's getting harder and harder. Sometimes you got good days, some days you got bad days. I'm finding out a lot of stuff that's making me mad, but instead of banging on my door I go to sleep.

I'm tired of being around people who always talk about what they do but never show you. They be pretenders. I got bigger problems on my hands and I just want to get out of here and stay out. I'm tired of incarceration, time's wastin' and I'm still pacin'. I'm just waitin' for my time to come when they say Mathew you got a release.

Then I'm gone, walk out the door and hug my mom. When I get out and spend mo' time wit my family 'cause yo' ninjas don't write you no letters. Yo' family gon' be the only ones who missin' you, remember that...

-Damani, Alameda

From The Beat: Seems like your family is doing their best to be there for you while you're inside while your friends aren't being very good friends. Maybe finding some new patnas to spend time with, ones who really care about you, could help you to not end up back in the hall. If you are tired of this place, it's time for you to start finding your way out of all this mess, loneliness and incarceration. Only you can do this. Start by going to school!



Angry? I Think Not

What's good, Beat? I feel like I haven't left, but this time I know I'm here for good. I have court tomorrow, April 25th, and my PO is going to place me. I really don't want to go to placement. Apparently I have an anger problem. I'm out of control and a threat to my community. I'm being charged for a (415) disturbing the peace, and (242) battery. I don't think I'm a violent person, I just lose my temper rather quick, like a ticking bomb or a switch. But, yeah, I really miss my family.

My mom is angry (and I don't blame her) but she understands how I act (I think!) My lil' brah brah is just like me—angry at everything. I just hope he don't keep getting locked up like me. This is my 9th or 10th time, and he's been locked up six times. I've tried to set a good example for him, but I don't control his actions.

People can't tell me what to do or I'm gonna go bad. I hate rules and the police. I dislike school, but I still go, 'cause I'm aiming to get my diploma. Got two years of high school. I'm turning seventeen in the fall. I'm getting too grown for this bullshhh—it's time for me to wake up and change. Hopefully me being sent away will change my life and my attitude. Well, yeee.

-Queen Bee, Marin

From The Beat: Anger itself is a response to something that you think is unfair or outrageous, or is causing you pain, and is nothing to be ashamed of, it's when you take that anger out on someone else that mess happens. What keeps making you so angry? What can you do to stop it from happening and hurting you? Can you get help now?

How Has The World Changed

The world has change a lot first off back in the day people will settle their problems by fightin'. Nowadays we gon' pull that four-five on you, 'cause ninjas ain't fighting no more. Ninjas make mo' money then in the older days and money lead to a lot of problems.

Back in the day you didn't have to worry about people robbing you or people carjackin' you. Nowadays ninjas will rob a old lady take everything she got then hit her in a mouth with a gun and trust me it has happened. I have seen it.

You got people killin' each other for no reason. You know back then, people was getting killed but you feel me not like the new generation. Nowadays you can be just drivin' you feel you on 24's and you sliding through somebody's hood, and they ain't never even seen you -- they gon' bust them thangs.

'Cause that's how it go now. So yeah, to me the world change a lot since old times.

-Von

From The Beat: Do you think that the future will bring an even more violent world? How do you picture Oakland in 2025, for example? And given the violence you are also caught up in, do you expect you and your loved ones to be alive to see it? Should we be working to make things less crazy? And if so, how?

Everything On A Lesser Scale

I think that the world has changed some ways for the better and worse.

Back in the day I think that the level of violence changed. People used to fist fight, and nowadays people just shootin' without hesitation. Also the clothing has changed but I think as time goes on that will always happen.

Now there is more technology than back in the day. Everything was on a less scale.

-Cree

From The Beat: It's too bad that the new technology just seems to make killing easier. Do you see any positive uses for the technology, ways people could actually be trying to make the 'hood safer?

Dedicated To Brandy

You stayed true to me when I didn't stay true to myself
You put me up when I was down.
You made me smile when it was a frown
You could have let me go but you said "you will be there till time ticks no more.
You were the one to cheer me when I was down.
You were there when I was in jail.
You kept me on the right track instead to fail.
You are the one I want for life.

-Lil' Momo

From The Beat: There's nothing better than the knowledge that someone believes in you. Now it's just a question of believing in yourself. Do you?

Harder and Easier

To me life is way harder and easier in two different ways. 'cause of the times these days. Back in the days you didn't have to worry about getting robbed, shot and all that other shhh, but at the same time it's just as hard 'cause they are the ones who started our generation and I know it's hard for them, 'cause look where we at.

-Repo

From The Beat: Are you saying you feel like the generation above us is part of why things are messed up today? If that's true, then what kind of legacy are WE leaving for the generation below us?

Turf Life

The life of a young hitta on the Hayward streets.
We turf it and we handle business.
We gets hit by the five-oh on the daily.
Then they lock you up for gang involvement
And now you seeing white walls that connect to a steel toilet. The turf life.
Then they release you on EM for being a homie.
But, what can you do it's life.

-Ryan

From The Beat: Doesn't sound like much of a life. Stress, pain, betrayal, the knowledge that you are disappointing the people you love, the loneliness of lockdown. Isn't it time to make some plans for a future?

Shhh Happens

What's up Beat!? Its yo' homeboy Dopey from Hayward. I'm still in this weak ass place called Juvy and I'm gonna be here for a minute. All I got is time, but I hope I don't get put into a situation that will mess up my straight release. If one does….oh well I've messed up at the easiest placement in all of California, when I was ' bout to get out going home on a passes every weekend.

But the life style I chose to live had me end up here. I'm 18 now. Next stop Santa Rita, no more Juvy. Shhh happens though, you gotta stay solid to survive this life style!

-Dopey

From The Beat: Actually, the opposite is true: The harder you try to stay solid to a lifestyle that is really a deathstyle, the less likely you are to survive. So just the way you "chose" this life, are you ready to choose to opt out of it?

Numbers

I'm a gang member
Numbers of bullets are after me
Numbers of people want me
Satan's after my life
My homies are dying and we just banging two numbers.
Numbers of haters, numbers of time in jail
But is nothing for a gangster
But a gangster is a fool falling for a color
Banging for nothing
Asking for Satan to give me another chance
It's all a matter of time.

-Satan

From The Beat: You do a good job here of twisting the word "numbers" around to all it's different meanings – it seems like just by the fact that you survived to live another day, and write another poem, means that you've had a second chance, right? Now it's not a matter of time, it's a matter of you making a decision about how you want to live.

The Game is Harder

I think me and my parents' lives are in the middle, because when they were growing up some things in Oakland were just beginning. Therefore it was easier because it was new, but at the same time it was harder because their generation had to pave the way.

It is easier for me because they gave me the game but it is harder because now it is all at its peak: The drugs, murder, snitches etc.

They just told me to beware my surroundings, and tried to prevent me from doing the same as them.

-James

From The Beat: It does seem like everyone that tries to play "The Game" these days always seems to lose it. Have you learned any lessons from getting knocked down, and have you figured out how you're going to get out of this no-win game?

Being A Father...

Part 1

Being a Father

It's easy to say it's not hard to become a father, but when you really are going to be a father, it changes things a lot.

Especially when you are locked up, you think about it every day, and even if you try not to think about it, you still do. You can't escape these thoughts, no matter what you say or what you do.

I'm going to put it like this. I'm a month away from being a father and I'm stressing like a dog 'cause I don't know where I'm going to be on the day my baby's born.

Part 2

Going Good.....

So far so good. I went to court and I got released to shhh! I thought that I wasn't going to get sent there. Instead I thought I was going to get sent to a group home and I would have to run from it again, but now I thank God that they are going to send me to where they are instead of a group home.

Now that I got the good news, I'm able to sleep every night since the judge gave me the good news I'm a lot happy now 'cause I'm going to be able to see my baby be born I'm having a baby girl, "I'm going to be a daddy".....

-Pinche Gordo

From The Beat: Congratulations! It's good to hear that positive things are happening in your life. Now it's time to come back with some positivity of your own. What kinds of changes are you going to need to make?

Markita And Jermane

Love! What is love? To me love is what I have for my girl.

I love her more than my next breath. I honestly think that I couldn't make it without her. I love her. She's my soulmate. I never found anyone more sophisticated and educated then her.

I honestly love her, we have been together for four years and six months now, and I love her to death. Even though I sometimes mess up our happy home, she bears with it and we get through the stormy weather.

That's why I love her. She never turned her back on me and she vowed to always be here for me. So far she has kept her promise and that good. We may have our ups and downs, but in the end we'll always come to an agreement and work things out, and that's what I think true love is about. That's why I love my girl Markita. I love you baby and I'm sorry for hurting you -- please forgive me.

-Jermane

From The Beat: It's good to hear that she is there for you, and that she has kept her promises to you. What promises have you made to her? And have you kept them?

My Mom Worked On a Farm

Well, the first thing I could say about "is your life easier or harder than your parents life?" Is that yes, their life was harder? Well, at least my mother's life was. She had to work on a farm and their money situation was way different than it is now. But with us now it's hard too. We have more laws and more things we can and can't do.

-A daughter

From The Beat: This is a great first paragraph, we wish you could have written more! What made farm life difficult for your mom? And what are some of the things you can and can't do that make life hard for you now?

I'm On, But I'm Sober

I'm feeling low, cause I was always high
Tired of this daycare,
Thinking of home when I'm sigh
But I ain't sleepy at all I'm wide awake
When everybody else is asleep
Full off county food thinking
bout how I'm gon' eat

-James

From The Beat: Now that you've had this time to miss being free, do you think you'll just go back to the same old same old when you are released?

The Next Person To Occupy My Cell

I could tell a person who about to come my room in that it's kinda of cool room --A cool size clean and no tagging. You got a cool view even though most of the time it's nothing to really look at.

But you have to make top citizen like me. Y'all can expect people and sometimes staff trying to get at you but that's normal, you feel me? That happens mostly everywhere I go. To make your life in this hall OK, just follow instruction. You don't got to prove anything to the next ninja. Just be yourself.

Ninjas come to the hall with they mask on trying to act hella hard. But they know damn well they wouldn't do anything they do in here or talk as much shhh as they do in here on the outs. Like this one ninja tried to beast up on me so I was telling wait till we get on the outs. When I had got out I slid through his spot in the east supposedly where he said he was from and he was nowhere to be found. So I just started laughing saying to my potnas I don't know why I wasted my time on that fake ass ninjas? So from that experience I said to myself I'm not going to let other people get to me.

And I say to whoever coming to my cell, just kick back and do your time. The knowledge that I have learned doing my time is too fool more people. Like in here. Most of the time you see me quiet with my head down. A person who doesn't know me is going to be like aw this ninja a soft ass ninja. But that's what I want people to think cause I ain't never been fake.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Why even write a note to the next person occupying your cell? If the first thing you do when you finally get freed is go looking for trouble to settle up a petty score, you'll probably be right back in the hall in a minute to give your message in person. Why are you so caught up in showing that you're "hard," when you should be showing that you are strong – strong enough to make a positive change, and smart enough to stop hanging out on your corner (which we of course deleted from this piece.)

I Can't Sleep...

I can't sleep at night, because where I'll be home I wouldn't sleep at night. I would go to sleep like around six or seven in the morning and sleep all day and be out in the street from four or 5:30 PM 'till six or seven in the morning.

Now that I'm in this detention facility, I hardly get some sleep...I'll sleep several times in the day, but each time, so every day my eyes hurt. Sometimes I think I'm going to end up blind or something, I just got that feeling, because I don't sleep like I should.

-Pg

From The Beat: By now you've had some more time to adjust yourself to the Hall's sleep schedule. Are you getting the rest you need? And don't you think that the schedule you kept before was a big part of what led you to messing up?

How Has The World Changed

I think the world has changed a lot and it always will. From music that we listen to from the technology we have and use today, but I say what has changed the most is the way we think and act and clothes.

-Marcus

From The Beat: This is a good start Marcus, but we'd like to know more. Give us some details so we can picture what you're talking about. What were the old music, technology, clothes, ideas and actions like? What are the new ones like?

Update

What's up? Yeah I'm still in max. Waiting on them to come get me for the Y. Yeah tho' I'll be back in 2011. You know how that shhh be, you can't hold a real ninja down for too long. I be back soon on the block wit my damn homies.

-Ro Ro

From The Beat: We appreciate the update. Sorry to cut your piece up but as guests of the system we have to be careful about what we let in The Beat. We hate to hear you'll be back in 2011. Sounds like losing your freedom this time hasn't bothered you enough to stay on the outs next time. What will it take? By the way, it's dangerous to believe "they can't hold a ninja down" because they actually can, and we'd rather see you on the outs making something of your life.

Free Us All!

First off let me say free my bras. Man it seem like the system is just targeting the people in my circle.

The beginning of '08 was great, every thing was looking good. Most of my peoples was out. I mean we was doing our thang. But these last two months been lookin' ugly. It seem like the police just did a street sweep and me and all my goons got caught up in it.

I pray for my ninjas every night and hope the best come to us all. Even though we be out there wildin' we don't belong here. We suppose to be out there doing our thang. Besides me and my boys we the solidest youngstas. Free us all and let us get back to doing us.

-Chippa

From The Beat: No one likes to see their friends locked up, and especially when it's all happening at once. But it sounds like you planning to do the same thing wit yo goons when you get out that you was doin' before. And you keep doin' the same things, you probably gonna end up locked up again eventually. You say "free us all" but it sounds like bein' locked up must not be so bad, since you don't seem to mind it enough to try to avoid it next time. Write to The Beat and tell us why staying free isn't as important as doin' yo' thang with yo' bras.

Is Your Life Easier Or Harder Than Your Parents' Life

This be yo boy Rj about to tell you why I think our lives are harder to live in today than when my mom and dad was my age. I say that even tho' they had to deal with that racism shhh we don't have to deal with it today. But back in '67 they didn't have to worry about getting shot at over some stupid shhh you didn't have shhh to do with. I say it's different because back then they didn't shoot, they fought, and dat made it kinda easier to survive out there on the streets.

-Rj

****From The Beat: We hear you. In our opinion, racism is still alive and well these days, but it comes out in some different ways than back in the day. Racism has been killing people for years, and we actually think that systemic racism is an ingredient, along with poverty, in all the killing you are talking about, even if black and brown boys are the ones with the guns. If you can step outside that, you'll not only be saving yourself, you'll be fighting the racism that's working to keep you in that screwed up system. Can you imagine a new way for yourself to step out of all that shhh?***

Changes

Everything's been changing some for the better and some for the worst.

Cell phones in the 90's were the size of bricks now in 08 they paper thin.

In 2000 dubs was the shhh now eight years later and 20 inches bigger,

they got cats down south riding on 40's.

-Mackin' Nam

From The Beat: Thinner, bigger, newer...status symbols look different but they show up in every era. If you had to think about the bigger picture, about the meaning of the changes you've seen, what would you say? Do you think people are more or less satisfied with their bling now?

Change

Change is hard for me. I'm trying to change but I keep going back to the same stuff. I just got released from camp. When I got out I was doing good too, but I slipped up. I know I was doing better, but yeah I messed up again. I don't think they're gonna go easy on me this time.

It comes to a point where change is necessary and that time has come for me. I had everything I wanted on the outs, but I go and mess everything up. My loved ones always tried to help and give me advice but my patnas the ones holding me down.

This time I'm really gonna change and stop messing up. I was doing good this time but someone pushed my buttons. I gotta control my anger better. Whenever I get out my plan is to try an get a job and spend time wit my female 'cause she keep me out trouble. If I would of listen to her I wouldn't be here right now. She said "Don't go stay with me tonight" but then I left and I ended up getting arrested.

-Lil Kenny

From The Beat: So you had it good and you lost it. That bites. We're all for your determination to change and we're glad you have a girlfriend who helps you stay out of trouble. She sounds like a good person to spend time with. But let's be real here and go beyond just saying it's gonna be different next time. At some point you will be in situations where you get mad. How will you control your anger? Have you done anger management? Did it help you? Imagine yourself in the situations that would normally cause you to "mess up." What'll you do different this time?

In The Dark

I was once in the sunshine but now I'm in the dark
It feels as if the grim ripper is trying to tear me apart.
But I'm fighting back as hard as I can
Changing into the lane of being a grown up man.
I just wanna live a positive life, but it's negative in my way
No way to get around so it's here that I stay.
But everyday it's something new, so one day it might change.
But until then I'ma do the things that I do
Maintain for my heart to stay pumping -- so do what you do.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: The rhymes in this flow are terrific – they show how much potential you have to do great things one day. But you can't wait till things "might change."

A Sad Place To Sleep, My Cell

It's ugly bein' in this cause it's only two places from here: either the pen or you might get lucky and go home.

-Mackin Nam

From The Beat: We can understand it looks ugly in your cell and in the hall, especially when you got some time in the pen looking likely. Anything you can do to help yourself get home rather than the pen?

Life As A Teen

It all started when I was a young teen. My life started changing, I started using drugs, robbing people, dropping out of school, running with the wrong people.

Moms was even using drugs! She would buy me things and take them back to dope dealers to get a rock. We even had to sleep outside for a period of time, and that's how my life as a teen was rough.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Sounds like you and your mom have been through some rough times! Are things better now, do you and she have support from other people in the family? We're sorry to hear about the troubles she's gone through – it's a tough addiction to break, but with help, people do!

White People

These people don't care nothing about us. They see a ninja and try to do whatever to him. They killin' us. They say you got a gun an' just shoot. They throwing time at ninjas like it nothing, like it don't change your life.

They offer a ninja two strikes 15 or 20 years for a deal in adult court they don't give a damn about a ninja. These people don't want to hire you, they play a dirty game. This shhh wild. In adult court the time that they give ninjas ain't making sense.

-Marcus

From The Beat: We agree with you that the system usually isn't fair. When you are facing this reality, what do you do about it? What have you learned to take care of yourself? If someone else came to you with this complaint, what advice would you give him or her? Also, it sounds like every white person you've met has messed with you. Have you ever met a white people who wasn't discriminating against you? If so, we'd like to hear about that too.

Who Can I Trust

There's only one person in this world I can really trust. I mean, you can trust your family too, but trusting yourself is the best way to go. You can't even trust your family or friends that much. They can tell you anything and you would think it's true. I had a lot of experiences growing up. I've been lied to by mom and friends.

Now that I'm locked up I had a lot to think about, and I was just thinking about who in this world can I trust. I came to a conclusion and it's myself. If I wouldn't have trusted my friends I wouldn't be here.

-Lil' Kev

From The Beat: Trusting yourself is a good place to start, so you can look to yourself for answers and not rely on people with bad judgment to make decisions for you. At the same time, it can get lonely when you trust no one else. What about trusting only those who prove they are solid and working to make friends who are trustworthy and will help you stay out of the hall? This would be a powerful stance to take.

Is Your Life Easier Or Harder Than Your Parent's Life

I think it was my mom that had it harder in life when she was growing up. The reason I said it was harder on my mom and them is because when she was growing up with six brothers and six sisters and plus their dad wasn't around like that. Her mom was more stricter then my mom is now. She didn't play games. And plus my mom and them grew up in Oakland, California.

-Lorenzo

From The Beat: We hear that your mom had a hard time growing up with so many brothers and sisters and her dad not around. That's rough, but it sounds like your grandmother's strictness helped them take care of business. Other than strictness, what qualities might help a person rise above their hard times? Do you ever wish your own mother had been stricter with you?

That Love Is Hard To Find

Love is the opposite of hate
Being with that someone who makes you feel great
That someone you tend to trust
And is willing to surrender all yo' love
That burning, fiery sensation through your heart
That love
That when push comes to shove
When your heart speaks out loud
That love is love that's hard to talk about
You hold the key to my most cherished prizes
To open the chest while amazing me with those most precious eyes
Having time to spare I start to wonder do you really care
I want to go back to where the love is truly at
I hope one day we can go back to where we left behind the love
That love is hard to find.

-Tayana

From The Beat: This is a great poem about romantic love. We'd love to hear you take the same kind of thoughtfulness and intensity to write about self-love.... A love poem to an amazing woman such as yourself!

I'm Gonna Be Somebody

Times is changin', nothing is the same.
I come back to the hall and all the staff know my name.
This my third time here and I don't plan on comin' back to this place.
Y'all not gon' see me, uh-uh, not my face.
I'm not gonna wear these juvenile hall clothes,
I can't live like this, this not the life I chose.
I wanna go home 'cause I miss my family, I wanna get my shhh together,
I have a plan for me.
I'm gonna go to college, get me one of the degrees.
Yes sir I'ma be rich, I'm gonna make G's.

-Skittlez

From The Beat: Nice rhymin' Skittlez. Now that you've laid out your plan, we want more details! Are you doing your SAT's, and visiting college campuses? Are you looking for scholarships and mentors? We hope you start doing all that when you get out, because the best thing to go along with a dream is a plan.

Scared

What's poppin' Beat Within? This yo' little ninja from Oakland. This shhh serious out here. When I be in these streets, and I got beef, I be scared. Sometimes I get scare to walk the streets, because people be looking for me. But I'm trying to turn my life around and stop getting down because these ninjas is clowns. My frown be upside down, I ain't playing around. Sometimes I feel like laying down and never getting up.

-Li'l Ree

From The Beat: You damn sure need to start changing the ways you are living your life before something serious happens to you. And it sounds like you see a lot of negatives to the lifestyle you're living. It can be scary and even life threatening. You're moving in the right direction, wanting to get out of that life, just keep at it, don't give up!

The World Is Crazy

Babies having babies the world is going crazy.
Kids killing kids these ninjas is shady.
The shhh that goes on just seems to amaze me.
A lot of ninjas hate me but they don't seem to faze me.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: This could be the beginnings of a good flow. But we had to cut out your name because it was a turf call. Next time come up a name that isn't also a block, OK?

How Has The World Changed

How has the world changed
No more fights it's pure gun play
Family ain't safe they get popped too
If you the one to blame
There's no more respect got to protect
Your barrio to the fullest man,
Youngsters trying to come up
Showing no mercy to the next man
Things have changed
From the way the og's were raised
Age doesn't matter now, you can get life
The judge shows no remorse
And from then on its life in the pen
It's through—no matter what you bang
Game over it's how the world has changed

-Big Rig

From The Beat: We like how you put your words together, man. This is a nice piece. Especially liked the internal rhyme between "respect " and "protect." You show not only how dangerous the system is for gangstas but also for the people they love. It sounds like a real bind—if you protect your barrio, it's likely to get you locked up so far away you can't protect your peeps at all. What's the solution?

Confusing Love

How do you say goodbye
To someone you can't let go?
How do you forget someone you love?
How are you supposed to stay away
From someone you're so used to being next to
Someone you're used to holding
Talking with, loving?
Is a paper really going to keep us away?
Can they really keep us apart
Am I supposed to say goodbye
When you won't let me go?
How do you say goodbye
To someone you can't let go?
How am I supposed to ignore
Your voice.
How am I supposed to avoid your touch.
How am I supposed to control my heart
How am I supposed to say goodbye
To someone I can't let go.

-Lizzie

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem Lizzie. You are asking a lot of difficult questions I'm sure many Beat readers can relate to. And what is the mysterious paper that's keeping you apart?

Missing Out

I don't know how my life is right now because I'm in jail right now, and I'm doing fine but I'm in a bad place that I shouldn't be in. So I can't tell you how my life is because it goes both ways.

My parents are doing great and they are moving into a new house.

I found out the other day that my cousin went to join the army and they threw her a party that I couldn't go to because I'm in here, and I feel bad enough I didn't go but their life is great right now.

My life is crazy because jail is not cool for anything, I hate being told what to do in the morning and afternoon and at night.

-Samuel

From The Beat: Yes, it sure it hard to hear about other people having fun when you're locked up being told what to do and how to do it. And, some of your family's happiness is probably reduced by the fact that you're locked up. What are you going to do on the outs to make sure you get your share of happiness too and not have to get locked up again?

Next Person Coming In

The next person to go in my cell after me is either cleaning it or doing time. If they are like me then I'm sure they're going to be bored.

-Ramon

From The Beat: Can you find things that matter to you that can help you feel less tuned-out (books, writing, school, conversations, ideas...?)

My Life And Mom's Life

My life compared to my mom's. I'm not gone say it's more harder but me and her had difficulties in our life so we easy and hard at times.

-Mackin Nam

From The Beat: So you've both had easy and hard times. Okay, now say more. What difficulties have you both had and what's been easy?

Next Person In My Cell

I can't even tell the next person how his time in my old cell will be. I don't know that ninja anyway. So he better make the best out of it as much as he can. Do whatever he or she got to do. All I can say, I ain't gone say shhh to him or her anyway.

- Keith

From The Beat: So you don't have anything to say to the next person in your cell. Okay. Are there any words of advice you wish you had heard before coming into the hall?

Screw Friends

Since this whole thing went down all my copartners been turning on each other because every one thinks everyone is snitching. Well I'm gonna tell you straight up. I'm not about to do 25 years for the next man unless he is my close friend or a family member.

None of this would of happened if someone wasn't running their mouths. I have a good idea of who it is and I want to tell him screw you. There's only one person I'm still close to and it's my copartner who is like a big brother to me.

Well anyways I want to say screw everybody else. Ninjas can say what they want I ain't tripping because they all talk. I want to see what ninjas gone do when I get out. I hope ya reading this, I don't give a damn no more.

-Lil' Kev

From The Beat: The whole situation does sound nasty, and we can understand why you'd be angry and want to tell people to go to hell. At the same time, if you are actually inviting people to fight with you, it sounds like you are asking for trouble, and that is not going to help keep you on the outs.

Left Every Thing

I left every thing that I had.
Sittin in this cell feel like I'm sitting in hell.
I miss my loved ones plus I can't even get bail.
In my mind I feel like all I did was fail.
But the lord said follow me and you'll be free.
And when you gone you gonna have everlasting life with me.
So I try to follow him so I can have some peace.
If you lost all you can do is follow him at least.
I got the lord so I know I can make it.
Without being a hypocrite an' trying to fake it.

-Magnificent

From The Beat: It's important to have hope when you're locked up. Keep writing and opening your heart to all the possibilities that may come if you dedicate yourself to a new way of living.

Why I'm Back In The Halls

Hey, this yo' boy Lil' Snoopy from Oakland. Well, I'm back in the hall because I was messing up in Camp Sweeny. They don't want me back. Well I'm tripping because I have to start my time over again somewhere else. I've been incarcerated since the last day of October, 2007 and I'm just trying to go home because I'm tired of leaving and coming back up here. So yeah, my goal is to be easy and do my time.

-Lil Snoop

From The Beat: Sounds like a good goal to us. What about Camp was hard for you that you were messing up? Since you've been inside for a while, are there things about you that you think have changed? Do you think about home differently now than you did in October?

Money Motivator

TWB: So Lil' Chill what's your motivation?
Lil' Chill: Is that really a question? You see me. I am young trying to get it. You smell me girl I smell like money.
TWB: How do you plan on getting money?
Lil' Chill: I am just trying to get rich anyway I can, but fast, 'cause I'm tired of waiting.
TWB: How would you respond to the haters?
Lil' Chill: My response to the haters is feel free to hate on me cause while you hating, I'm gonna shine more. Gotta go.

-Lil' Chill

From The Beat: How are you gonna go about getting rich without putting your life or your freedom in danger? Is money so important that you're willing to die for it?

Free me

Free me right now and I will change.
How people ask me.
One, by stop smoking weed/popping pills.
Free me right now and I will change.
How people ask me.
One, by going back to school and getting good grades and good behavior.
Free me right now and I will change.
How people ask me.
One, by stop disrespecting higher authority.
How will I respect 'em?
I will not call them dig, witches and the rest.
But if you don't let me go I will maybe not change.

-Fat Dan

From The Beat: Those are all good ideas to help keep yourself on the outside. Are there things inside that make it hard for you to do right by you? You will get out eventually, and staying longer than you want to doesn't mean you shouldn't change yourself.

Hard Times

I think that our lives as young men is harder than our parents life because when they were our age they didn't use guns. They use to fight instead of using a gun something did remain the same.

There were gangs just like there are now, but there more gangs right now then when there were back in days. So I think our generations is harder then when our parents were our age because they wasn't using guns.

-John

From The Beat: You're right times change over the years, especially decades. But there weren't as many guns when your parents were growing up. People really did use to knuckle up and fight. Nowadays it's hard, we have a bad economy, people scrambling for a dollar, and kids playing with guns. How do you think you can overcome all these obstacles? Do you think your parents know how hard it is being a kid nowadays?

Why Am I Not Released

I went to court 6 days ago and got released on EM, yet, why am I still here? The thing is staying in here is making me do bad things because I am not released. I am sick and tired of spending the night in here. I want to go home to see my mom and family.

-Donald

From The Beat: Well you have to be patient. You're not gonna be trapped in there forever. You got yourself in there. The only thing you can do now is be patient and not make your situation worse. Relax and behave and you will be outta there before you know it.

Rich Kids

I'm an uptown rich kid from these Oakland streets. All I do is get dough and do my thang. Don't mess with no suckas 'cause fake ninjas 'bout hung. Do the math, half of these ninjas lyin' 'bout the life. Give a ninja an inch, he take a whole mile from ya.

-A young uptown hater

From The Beat: Sounds like you think you've got it all figured out. If doing your thang is what got you in the hall, maybe it's time to change something about your life. What changes can you make to keep yourself from coming back?

The World Is Changing

A lot of stuff really changed, especially back in the day. The world is more advanced and people is more smarter. The way the people used to wear their clothes back then, if you look at what people was wearing back then and look what the people is wearing now, it really changed. The phones is more hi-tech, the way the people talk, the words they use is different. The world changed because of the people.

Humans start discovering stuff and they start getting smarter and smarter, they change the world. Everybody have a reason to be here, to change something, to do something!

-Mike

From The Beat: Those are all really good examples of how the world is constantly changing. We can all do or change something, like you said. What do you want to contribute to this changing world? Big or small, it all counts.

What My Dad Told Me Before He Died

Hey let me talk to you for a min…

My dad told me when I run these streets he always sleeps. His phone ring late, he don't care what happen too. His nerves bad, so he just sit down and watch the TV. He heard about a shooting, he was so happy, he thought it was me! He heard police in town, he think they got me. He always look 'cause he think its me in the back seat.

He said " when you not home that's the only time I have peace". I could hear him now, you need to get your ass out of here. I pray to God he don't never see me. I still hate daddy.

My momma raised me in the streets, she is a hella of a lady. The shhh I'm doin' now don't got nothing to do with how you raise me. This shhh killing me, that me and my mama hate my daddy. And this is real.

-Dominic

From The Beat: You've been through a lot with your dad that hasn't been easy for you. It's horrible and not ok to hear that a parent would rather not have you around. Sounds like he is very frustrated with your lifestyle and choices. Your mom is there for you though, and it's so important for you to be there for her in return. What you do may not be because of how she raised you, but it probably really affects her life too.

Life

Um, I think my dad had a harder life. Because he has been in prison for something he didn't even do. And also like right now it's hard for him to find a place to live. He is going all over to everybody he knows to stay over there telling his parole officer like every other month different addresses that he stays at.

But I know he is all right, I guess, because he is staying with my big brother and his girl friend and daughter. But other than that when I have spent all this time in my room, that I should've kept what was mine and stayed in the house; not trying to go out and steal everybody else's stuff that wasn't mine.

But right before I got caught I said to myself I was going to stop and get a job to earn my stuff, but it's way too late now. But after these six months in Camp Sweeney I could go straight to a job. When I get out I just have to wait one more month 'till I turn 16 so I can get me a light job at like Safeway or Lucky's or some thing like that. But other than that I got my mind straight on that. No more trouble or seeing this place anymore. And that is just a little part of my life.

-Drew

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you let go of all the negative things you were doing that were getting you into trouble. It's a hard life for everybody your dad, you, us too, we have our own problems to deal with. But you just have to remember to stay positive and positive things will come. You don't get nothing good out of taking things from someone else, cause you wouldn't like it done to you. Can you dig it? So be easy, and keep ya' head up.

Is Your Life Easier?

~~O~~-vole Beat. This is Chikillo. Well my life is different from my parents because I'm affiliated, but my life is hard because I be getting in trouble too much. I be doing bad things when I'm out there with the homies because I just don't care about my crazy life.

I choose to bang so that's how I'm gonna be for the rest of my life. So it don't matter what happens to me because I'm a gang banger. To all out there keep your head up. Alrato.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: Why do you choose to live your life the way you do? Why do you make it hard for your self? In the end it's up to you but why put your life in danger? Why can't you kick it with the homies without looking for trouble? What about your baby that you need to take care of? Do you want that child growing up with no dad.

Free Me Right Now, Please

When I get out I'm going to change my life.
One, by not smoking marijuana.
Free me right now and I will stop popping ecstasy.
Free me right now and I will go to school.

-Christian

From The Beat: It sounds like you're ready and willing to change right now which is great. Unfortunately, you may not get out right when you want to. If quitting Marijuana is your first step, what are the next one?

Change

I want to change, and I want to do better but there are some things that I don't how to change. Some things, I do know. Like just stay to yourself and make sure you on your program. Also, it's good to have friends but stay to yourself most definitely as well.

Jessica

From The Beat: What are the biggest challenges you face in trying to do better? Is it pressure from friends?

Never Blink Never Cry

Oooo... Oooo... Oooo... this that new shhh bra
Oooo...oooo I never blink never cry I only
Rap this 'cause we live one time I'm
A real ninja you can hear it I'm rhymes
I hit the block I make the song
Cry I got the eyes of a new man I never
Blink I never cry. I only sold D for
My baby sister I always be on the
Grind I just pray to god we can
Live too times I'm gonna hit the block high
I'm gonna stay getting high for moms
Ninja you can here it in ma
Cries I love my baby sister so I'm gonna
Try to live three times I'm a real
Ninja you can hear it in my cries
Ooooo oooo oooo

-Lil' Domo

From The Beat: You say that you sell for your baby sister – how does that help her? Is it good for her if you're away in the hall? What are other things you can do to be there for her that won't land you where you are now?

My Life Is Harder

My life is harder than my parents because we got more risk of getting shot, getting robbed, and getting kidnapped. We can't get no job because we are not old enough so we must grind on the street corner and hope that the people we are selling to are not cops.

Our parents come home late from work and find out that we have been shot and killed or beat up or got caught doing something stupid and we went to jail. We got to stay with a gun so our enemy won't catch us slippin'. We got to have our eyes everywhere so nobody won't try to run up on us. Our parents they don't have to worry about that because they are driving there cars not worrying about people trying to strip them out there car.

We got to steal cars for transportation because we are trying to get to parties or to a special destination and we don't feel like taking the bus. All that we go to through and our parents thinking we are doing good and going to school.

-Isaiah

From The Beat: Life is hard as it is, but why do you have to steal cars to get from point A to point B? Why can't you ask someone for a ride? Why would you throw your freedom away just because you need to get to a party so you're gonna steal a car? That doesn't make any sense. Whoever said that you have to steal a car to go to a party? Sounds like you make things harder for yourself than they really are.

My Life

My life is hard I been doing so much. I remember just going to school then being a kid. After that I got into trouble doing scams. Sooner or later next thing you know I was selling dope and weed. I got bored forgot my training and started hustling. Next thing I know I was buying cars, pimping girls, doing everything wrong that changed my life.

It put me in a bad predicament and now I'm lock up. I remember a song the verse goes like this, "I'm locked up they wont let me out, no, they not let me out." But when I get out I am going to do the right thing. I'm gonna stay out of trouble keep my nose clean. Do my probation.

-Sharp

From The Beat: We hope you do stay out of trouble and keep your nose clean. You can buy cars, all the things you need, but you don't have to sell drugs and pimp girls to do it. Get a job, or find a legit hustle. 'Cause all that money, cars,

Changes

The world has changed. I'm going to be straight up. When I first started to come to the hall I thought I was never going to come back. Now that this is my fifth time I'm not sure how my life is going to turn out in the future. I was never getting in trouble back in the day but then I became a homeboy.

At first it wasn't what I wanted it to be, but now that I know people got my back it's not so bad. I'm from Irvington and all my homeboys try to encourage me to better my life but I didn't get it at first.

Now I get what they told me. I'm not ever going to drop out. I'm just going to listen to what they been telling me for some years now, if you feel what I'm saying then fo' sure. All right then, be cool and keep your heads up.

-Rudy

From The Beat: So you're gonna live your life the way someone else dictates it for you. You're gonna let somebody boss you around for the rest of your life? Do you like being locked up and have staff tell you when to shower and when to eat, drink, and sleep? Cause that's the only thing you're gonna find in jail. And that goes for county and the pen too. What your homeboys didn't tell you is all the pain and struggle that goes with banging your set. All the countless funerals you're gonna attend and all the time wasted behind bars that you're gonna do. But you'll find out the hard way.

Is Your Life Easier Or Harder Than Your Parents

I think that parent life is harder because they got to work to get some money to take care of me and my brother and sister.

They've been taking care of me since I was small that why I think that my parent life is harder than my life. All I got to do is go to school and do what my parents tell me to do. That is easy. Now that I'm in jail, it makes my life harder.

-Gilberto

From The Beat: You're right it's hard being a parent, and it's also hard being a young person nowadays too. But life ain't easy for anybody. No matter how much money people have, there's always gonna be problems. Life is hard as it is it's up to you to make it easier or you make it harder.

How I Want My Life To Change

My life is a big mistake 'cause I am in jail. My life should not be like this. When I was younger, I never thought I was gonna end up in jail, but I don't need to dwell on this, my life goes on.

-Michael

From The Beat: Everyone makes mistakes, but it doesn't mean they define your whole life. And you're right, life does go on. It's up to you where you go and what you do with yourself. What do you think you can do to make the most of it?

Mad!

I'm mad pacing back and forth.
I feel like an animal locked behind doors.
I know God gave man freewill, but it doesn't seem like it when you have some one telling you what to do and all in your grill.
How is it that a man that bleeds just like me
tells me when to shower and tells me when to eat
while the person doesn't know me or relate to me.

-Jah-Kwans

From The Beat: You really shouldn't be mad at the staff though.' Cause they getting money to tell you what to do. Staff didn't put you in jail. You put yourself in jail! They're just doing their job. If you don't like being told what to do then maybe you should stop breaking the law so you won't get arrested. Think about it. You can have your freedom and nobody can tell you shhh as long as you doing what you're suppose to be doing.

Life Is Hard

Well, my life is both easy and hard at the same time. Well the hard part about my life is that I'm always getting in trouble and I can't stay out of the hall, going to placements and stuff.

The easy thing about my life is that I get money and just live my life and I have fun doing things. But at the same time, it's not cool what I'm doing, but I'm just glad that I have my mom and my lil' brothers. It's hard to live the life of a gang member. It's easy to get money but you always got to watch your back and it's not cool, but that's just the life I choose.

-Casper

From The Beat: Just because it's the life you've chosen in the past doesn't mean it has to be your life forever. If constantly watching your back is not worth the easy money, maybe it's time to make some serious changes. Always watching your back is a scary thing, and could end up in you hurting yourself a lot more than just being in jail. What other options in life could you see for yourself? They're out there.

Watch Your Friends

There's a lot of people you meet in this world and you may become close with that person. You may have a best friend that you known since you was in preschool. Then when ya grow up ya want to go to the same school and everything. Let's say you met some one at school and ya know each other for like four months. When you get locked up, that's whenyou know who your friend is. Your best friend you known since preschool ain't writing you letters and supporting you. So you have to watch who you be with.

-Lil Kev

From The Beat: It sucks to be let down by someone you've felt close to. Have you ever asked the person why they are not writing you? If you have known each other since preschool, sounds like it might be worth a conversation where you ask "What the hell is your problem?" before you write him/her off.

Still Here!

Q-vole Beat? This is Chikillo. I'm still here but I'm not tripping because it's better being in here than R.O.P. But I'm mad because my PO. told me that I was gonna do more time because I got in a fight a couple of days ago. I was suppose to get out on August 20, 2008 but now I'm getting out on August 12, 2009 because the fight I got into and because I'm gang affiliated.

Man it's hella boring in here we do the same shhh everyday. I talked to my homies and they told me hella shhh going on out there, but I'm just gonna try to do my best in ROP Nevada so I could get out and be with the homies kicking it. Well Beat this vato is out.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: First of all you don't need to be worried about what's going on out "there" cause you're locked up! You need to be worried about yourself and where you're going in life period. Focus and concentrate on yourself and quit worrying about the homies so much. The homies aint gonna be putting food on the table for you or your son.

Lonely

When I'm in my cell I feel bored and sometimes even lonely. The only thing I can do is just daydream about everything I use to do when I was free. And things I'm going to do when I get out of jail, and also missing where I am from.

-Steve

From The Beat: Daydreaming about what you use to do is natural cause we understand there ain't that many things you can do while you're in your room. But you should think about how you can manage to stay out of jail.

My Money Great

Im riding on 24's my money great
I smoke weed everyday 'cause my money
Great im in Oakland all day 'cause my
Money great!!! I get cars all day put them on
Candy you I'm in Oakland and all the females happy.
I be riding with females 'cause my money great
and ninja I don't play and all my shhh paid

-Lil' Rapa

From The Beat: So while it sounds like you've got it going on with all that money, right now you're still in the hall. If having all that money for stuff you want means you have to keep coming back to the hall, and someday jail, is that worth it? What's the point of having money if you spend so much time locked up you barely get to use it?

When I Get To You

Whats up Beat?
I do this when I'm sad!
Hooooooowwwww when it get to you
Ninja!!! Hooooooowww when you jail its starting
To ya, you don't quit but don't ever give
Up 'cause when it comes that's when it get to you bra
and that's what I did
Some one in my family just got popped
A few days ago and I just start
Going bad because it was getting to
Me bra getting room-time a few days in a
Row damn it's all because when I let
It get to me howwwww
I try to be a real ninja and try
To let it fly but when it get to me
All I can do is cry!!! Why? Hooooooowwwww
I'm gonna try to make it some day without goin' bad!!!
I'm gonna try!!! Howwwwwwww

-Lil' D

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost someone in your family. It's normal for that to get to you and make you angry and upset. It doesn't make you anything less if you cry even. As for making it someday, you can do more than try. You can just make it.

Being Locked Down

Being locked down ain't no fun
Mad at it can't get no sun
No letters from friends
They say they down to the end
Setting in a cell
Mad as hell
But I'll be home soon.

-Gone Bad Reese

From The Beat: It must be hard not hearing any word from the people who are supposed to be your friends. Have you heard from anyone else, like your family? Maybe this tells you something about the people you were spending your time with.

The Next Person To Occupy My Cell

Fo' y'all who know me. I don't care about room time, because I give myself room time. So when they say go to yo' room, I don't be sad or pout 'cause it's only sugary people outside that do. If you can't take your room, then don't get kicked out of school. Like they told me at my group home, run yo' program. They often told me I was running my own program and that ain't good.

-Young Pill

From The Beat: What is it that you like about room time - is it being with your thoughts that you like or being away from other people? It's important to do your program and follow the rules to get yourself back on track.

Trying To Make It To Paradise

My life is cold, my life is rough,
but only because you gotta be tough.
Mad I'm gone, not at home, missing family, but happy
I'm safe.
But mad I am in a place with men of different race.

-Gone Bad Reese

From The Beat: Sounds like there's a part of you that feels safer being in the hall than you do being at home. What about being on the outside feels unsafe – is it something you're doing, or just stuff that's going on around you? Is there anything you can do to make yourself safer once you get out?

Damn

Dam my PO, I ain't gone
Stop being bad come and get
Me all you want you gone have
To come find me looking in the hood
I'm somewhere shinning!
Live every damn day
You better come like it's Friday
I tell my PO. if you come now I
Got my car fixed now I'm ready to
Go I'm in Oakland in a high speed I'm
Getting windy on 5.0 these ninjas
Not knowing my PO told me to turn
Myself in I told him go to hell
If you want me you better do your job and that's real
I told him you ain't gon' find me don't
Even try the streets, life got me gone I don't know
Why I'm just trying to see hella millions before I die.

-Lil' Domo

From The Beat: Sounds like the most important things to you are staying out of jail and making lots of money. If you're making your money outside the law then you can expect to keep ending up back in jail. If you want to be successful and not always be worrying about going back to juvenile, county worse prison you've got to make some serious changes in your life. Follow probation or else!

What Has Changed Since I Was Little?

A lot has changed since I was a little girl. I've got myself in a lot of trouble. When I was a little girl I never got in trouble. Now that I'm older I have done a lot of stuff like prostitution, drugs, and stuff like that. I really don't understand why I get myself in these positions. I will one day stop.

-Nichole

From The Beat: Thanks for your honesty Nicole. When do you think you will you stop? What will it take for you to stop?

The Next Person To Occupy My Cell

To be successful in the hall, you have to learn that a detainee will never win. So arguments with the staff are a waste of time even if they talk shhh to you. Just remember they can't touch you, so do what I do.

Ignore them, act like you ain't listen or you look right through them. That's the only way you'll win because they'll get mad and feel like they lost, because they can't spray you, slam you, or give you room time for not saying anything.

So that's just my way of bothering staff and keeping my name off that room time board you make a choice.

-Juice

From The Beat: Sometimes the best thing to do is just walk away from the situation (physically or mentally). But ignoring usually doesn't make the problem go away either. Words are the most important tool you have. It's all about knowing how to use them to get what you want out of a situation.

Tired Of Getting Heart Broken

What's up Beat... I'm so tired
Of getting heart broken by this
Girl named Diamond I been goin'
Out with her for two years... ok
Look y'all I been in and out of
Jail and group home look I told
My girl Diamond to write me
And she did, talking about how
Much she love me etc.... Look
I'm at a group home for six months
And I wrote her a dozen times and
She never wrote me back I call
Her she say I'm a baby etc.... Right
And never did and now I'm heart
Broken because her... when I get out
I'm gone call her and tell her
It's over because I'm tired of getting
Heart broken! Over the years I cried
For her, almost killed for her, and
She can't even write me back one
Time! I can't say I hate her, but I
Really dislike her now!!! But Beat
What should I do? I'm only 15 and
I'm giving up on girlfriends
with benefits someone help me please
Help Me!

-Lil' Heart Broken

From The Beat: It is so devastating to be burned like that by someone you love. We suppose you're putting in effort and time because you love her, and she's not giving the same love back to you. Then again, who is putting you in jail away from her? Take a look at you too! It sounds like it might be good to end it if she's causing you all this pain. It's not giving up if it's the right thing for you to move on. The time is now to look out for you!

I Hate It In Here

These are the things I hate about Juvie: wakening up at a certain time, going to school at a certain time, eating meals and having a time limit on when to finish, waiting a certain day to have fun.

The biggest thing I hate in here is opening the door and locking yourself in your room. It feels like from heaven straight into the gates of hell. I also hate some mean staff in here.

-Donald

From The Beat: Those are all things that you need to keep in mind once you get released. You don't like Juvie at all as we can see, so why come back. Why would you wanna get into trouble with the police if you know they're gonna bring you to the halls? Remember all the things you don't like about Juvie next time you decide to put yourself in a position where you might get into trouble.

My Life Is Harder Than Theirs

I feel my life is harder than my parents at this point in time, because they have never been to jail before when they were young. Back then young kids were not so bad. Parents had more control over their kids.

Now kids just do whatever they want to which makes most of the other kids look bad to the people around. That's why there are more kids in jail today instead of when our parents came up. Kids just don't listen to anyone today.

-J-Bear

From The Beat: Those are some really interesting insights. A lot more kids are in jail these days like you said. What do you think is the reason? Why do you think kids these days don't listen? Are there times that you don't listen? Why not?

Me And My Girl(s)

What's up Bea,t this Weezy, once again. I wanna thank you for putting my Beat piece in The Beat Within last time, it meant a lot.

Today I'm gonna tell you guys a story about two of my ex- girlfriends. I met this fine ass Afghan girl, and when I seen her I knew I had to go get at her. So I started talking to her as a friend and then after a couple days she tried to hook me up with her friend, and I was like "what the...?" I told her I wanted to get with her, not her friend. She told me she wasn't like that she was too religious so I was like ok forget it. I'll just use her friend to get to her.

The way I wanted that to work was, to make her jealous, and have her ask me out. Her friend and I got with each other and damn can't lie, her friend had me sprung. I mean she looked hella good. Pretty ass face, the perfect eyes, and the perfect soft lips.

Then the other girl came back just as I expected, but now I didn't want her. I was in love with her friend. Then nine months of me and her friend being together she asked me out and I made the biggest mistake of my life and said yes.

-Weezy

From The Beat: Sounds like using her friend to get to her wasn't such a good idea in the first place. Why do you think you said yes to her, and why was it a big mistake? What happened afterwards? Sounds like this is only the first part of the whole story. Tell us the rest!

Real Man and Fake Man

What's up Beat I'm gonna tell
You about real man and fake ninjas
And me.
I'm independent man I got my own car
About to get a big house when I
Get out and I got a job.
I lead to good things and I give
Money to let them get they shine on.

What a real man is...
1) always ready for funking season
2) help moms and the family out
3) never snitch
4) stay in school
5) never cross yo ninjas at da end
6) keep it real
7) got girls
8) stooge
9) going through it with a fake ninja
10) stay fitted

A fake ninja is...
1) always snitchng
2) never help family
3) never in school
4) crossing y' ninjas
5) always running from funking season
7) never fitted
8) talk hella shhh
9) never shine
10) Not a stooge
11) not going through with a fake ninja

-Lil' Stooge

From The Beat: A lot of the qualities you talk about are things that people do on both sides sometimes. Sometimes people help out the family, sometimes they don't. Are there times you've done things you're not proud of that are things a "real man" wouldn't do? It's always so black and white.

Leaving Behind

What's good? Yea I'm back. I thought I would never see the inside of this place against. But yet here I am.

Life is cool but I miss my family. My mom comes to see me every day and I know that every time she comes she almost breaks down and cries. I want to make my mom proud but being in here again only brings her pain.

I'm looking at two years. It's just the ones I have to leave behind that's the hard part. My mom, sister, brother and wifey are those I miss the most aside from my niece, nephew, and grandma. Life's messed up, but every ninja's got a spot in thug's mansion.

- S

From The Beat: It's always hard to deal with hurting loved ones but sometimes it just takes us a bit longer to learn from our mistakes. No matter why you're back, remember that you don't have to continue to come back. Once you get out again, use your family as your motivation to stay out of trouble. You owe it to yourself and to them!

Love of My Life

Michelle
I miss my baby girl
My everything
My world
She was my issue
Just because I miss you
Look up towards the sky
My only angel
Better than weed
You got me flying high
And that ain't no lie

-Michael

From The Beat: It's wonderful that you have someone on the outs who you care about this much. Does Michelle know you care about her like this?

Home Sweet Home

The days I miss home
A place where I was known
Everyday I smoked weed
It was my daily feed
San Jose's my home
Like weed to my dome
Everywhere I go

-Michael

From The Beat: Missing home is understandable when you're away from your family. We wonder, though: do you miss your home or what you were able to do when you lived at home? Remember, returning to your old ways will almost guarantee a return visit to the hall!

My Life and Rhymes

I stand five foot six
Chinky-eyed Vietnamese
I'm a one man army and bang no click
Thug is what I am
Give a shhh what you say
'Cause I'm straight from Vietnam
I was stuck between the grinds
Right on the line
Between Heaven or Hell
Most of you can tell
I lived life with struggle

-Michael

From the Beat: This is a really real poem. Many people live life with struggle and can relate to what you wrote. You're more than a thug, though. Take what you've lived and turn it into a source of strength, not a source of anger. There are too many of us out there!

San Jose Streets

-Michael

From the Beat: Interesting in appropriate poem Michael. Is that what the San Jose streets are like for you? Do you think the San Jose streets are like this for everyone? Next time deliver a poem all can embrace not just you and your crew

Dream On

I dream of you
But I don't know what to do
Last night you came
But I didn't ask your name
'Cause I woke up and you disappeared
Later on you reappeared
Your smile is so great
It's like you use it as bait
My fingers roll down her curves
And her eyes somehow touch my sexual nerves
But who are you
Damn I wish I knew
Outta all girls you're above
For some reason I think of love
Next to you is like the sun's heat
One day I hope we meet
I bet you'll blow me off my feet
I hope you come today
I'ma hold you hopefully you stay
Your dreams make my day
Would you ever be mine
If yes my life would be just fine
Closing my eyes as I dream of you
All the things that we can do
So ask yourself
Is that you

-Cisco

From The Beat: Who is this girl?! What a wonderful love poem Cisco. I hope you find her, if you haven't already.

Running

I never ran before.
Why run when you can just get all that shhh over with.
So man up for your actions and get your shhh over with.
If you do run, you always have to look over your shoulder.
So your choice: keep running or get it over with and push it all aside.

-Jason

From The Beat: Great message Jason! We should all take responsibility for our actions. Face up to what you've done, deal with it, and move on. It seems to us like that's easier than running and then paying for what you've done and running, no?

Something Surprising About Myself

What's up Beat? Today's topic is about 'something surprising about myself.' When people see me they think I'm a bad person. A person who does bad things and not good at doing anything good in life. But when you get to hang out with me and get to know me better. You would find out that I'm nice and that I have skills in drawing. People get real surprised when they find out that I can draw because they look at me like I'm only good to get into trouble. So that's it until next time.

-Jr

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing that about yourself Jr. People often stereotype others and don't realize that there are many different parts to each individual. How often do you draw? You should draw something for the Beat and submit it if you haven't already! We look forward to them.

Unfaithful

Sometimes I think if she's unfaithful or if that I'm just paranoid
but it's painful to think that the girl I love is cheating.
Why is it that it's for her that my heart is beating.
Maybe she isn't maybe it's due to too much cheating.
Why hasn't she accepted my calls. Maybe she's planning my rise or my fall
It was different when I messed around
But it's different when it's man's ground
Shhh maybe I shouldn't have been such a hard
Shhh is she going behind my back
Or is security something I lack
Is she unfaithful, is she loyal
Just the thought makes my blood boil
I hope that she ain't a blood-sucking flea
Maybe she is unfaithful
If she is, forget her, so ungrateful
If she did I wouldn't forgive
Then she wouldn't be the girl for which I live
Locked up so she can do many things
So if she is unfaithful I really didn't lose anything
It's her test

-King D

From The Beat: Why are you so mistrustful of your girlfriend D? If you really do have a tight relationship, you should be able to trust her to care enough about you not to hurt you by cheating. I really hope you yourself stick to the same standards you have for her, though.

My Parents

My parents are the greatest people in my life. Back in the day we fought a lot but as time went on we became a lot closer. Also the fact of being locked up really gives me a lot of time to think. I realized that they do so much for me and I wouldn't even realize it on the outs. I would think ya my parents they're cool. They buy me clothing, put food on the table. But after you get locked up you really don't realized what you got till it's all gone. Your rents brought you into this world, took care of you since I was a baby, told you right from wrong, and were always on your side. Just treat your parents with respect and don't take them for granted. I know my 'rents are the greatest people in my life and I love them to death. I'm never going to do anything to hurt them ever again.

-Da

From the Beat: It's great to see that being in here has given you a new appreciation for your parents! You're also very lucky to have two people who care about you like your parents do. Do they know how differently you feel about them now? We would tell them!

Being on the Run

While I was on the run,
I was always running from the cops.
Always smoking weed, drinking 40s.
Always out all night long.
Always messing with different girls.
Going to all kinds of different parties.
Couldn't stay home because the cops would go looking for me there
and it would get my mom in trouble.
Always wondering where I'm going to sleep tonight.
Being on the run gets old after a while because you always end up getting caught.
So those of you that want to be on the run, think about it.

-Eddie

From The Beat: What should those who are thinking about running think about Eddie? Why does being on the run get old? Tell us!

Something Surprising About Myself

When people look at me they see me as a pothead, criminal and screw up. But what they don't know about me is that I was a good athlete.

I played baseball since I was a tot. I started out at t-ball and went all the way up to travel team baseball. And those were the best years of my life. I traveled all over the United States to play in World Series tournaments.

Once I turned fifteen it all ended. Our team fell apart and I got bored of it. Then I started going into selling and using drugs to make some money.

I believe if I continued to play sports I wouldn't be in the position I am now…

-Gray

From The Beat: Many people choose to judge and stereotype others without giving people a chance to be anything else. We're glad you wrote this piece because it really highlights how there are so many different parts to every individual. We're sorry you didn't get the chance to continue playing but it's never too late to get back in the game, in both baseball and in life.

I like the Challenging Life

Well West up Beat this be Bones. I'm gonna tell you about me and my family.

Well first of all, my parents had a hard life since little because they didn't have a chance to go to school. They had to work for their own stuff and if they didn't well they wouldn't have nothing.

Well me I got an easier life because I have a chance to go to school and not work for my stuff because my parents want the best for me and don't want me to have the hard life they had when they were little. Well that's a bit about me and my family's life. Well for me having a harder life is even more fun because you have something challenging. And if you have something that's not that challenging it's not that fun, so that's why I think I chose the hard life instead because I like the challenging life. Alrato.

-Bones

From the Beat: A challenge often helps us appreciate what we have, but sometimes we only think it's better because the grass is always greener. Don't go searching for the hard life, but don't be afraid to face it for the things that are really important.

Missing Her

I miss her so much when I'm here in this place. She tells me it brings tears to her face. I just want to get out and do right so I can be with her every night. I miss her laugh and miss her smile but I'm going to be in here for a while. The mistake I made I can't take back, but when I get out I can change all that. So I can do good and stay out of here then she won't have to shed any more tears. I love you.

-Sg

From The Beat: Love has the power to change even the seemingly unchangeable. We may only be able to change the stuff in the future, and every step you take will be expressing your love for her.

Possible Release

Well hey what's up its me again. Well last time I wrote you guys about changing my life and I was happy because I was gonna get released on April 18, but I didn't, so they told me to come back to court on May 2. So I think I'm gonna get released, so that's it for today alrato.

-M-R

From the Beat: Sometimes the system is unpredictable, but it sounds like you're dealing well. We wish you all the best on the outs.

The Way I Live!

My life is like a whirlwind
got me trapped in the middle
I watch the world spin
too many lives being taken
got me hurlin'
I'm ridin' dirty and I really should be swirvin'
I remember when I use to slide through
haters love to mug me when I roll by
maybe it's because I live that good life
I'm dangerous like rabies
you're going to regret it if you ever try to play me
catch me in all black and you can't faze me.

-Epa

From The Beat: These are sick rhymes. You really have talent and you didn't even rhyme using curse words, either. We love rap like you do, but a lot of it these days is just cussing and degrading women. It's cool to see some nice flows. Keep rhymin' with purpose!

How Has My World Changed?

My world has changed in so many ways, so many ups and downs. My life has been shifted, molded in many ways. I've been stepped on like a diamond in the rough. My world is full of drugs, gang violence.

I'm locked up all the time, drug dealin', hustlin' the wrong way, shhh you name it. When I was a young boy still in elementary I would have never thought my future so far would have ended up like this, where my world is at this point in life. But I still got a long road ahead of me and I plan to make better choice and try again. Gone.

-Lucky

From The Beat: You're very right—you have a long road ahead of you. But that road will become more and more easy if you stick by your claim and make better choices. What can you choose to do that will keep you on a better road? What will you choose not to do?

Changes

The streets are changing.
People are shooting and stabbing a lot more.
The streets are getting worse and worse.
But what can anyone do, it's never going to stop.
It's only going to get worse and worse.
Everyone on the street has to pack a gun or a blade just to feel safe.
Screw it. Life's a bummer and then you die.

- J

From The Beat: It's never going to stop – that's what people want you to think. But if we think and hope higher, and put our dreams into action, great things are possible. Start by changing your own life, and help others along the way, and the world will start to be a better place.

What I Think About When I'm in the Hall

When I'm in the hall I think about my family,
but mostly I think about my baby's mama.
I'm going to be a dad in the next two months.
My baby's due June 27.
My lady is the best thing that happened to me.
I'm hella grateful for her being in my life.
She's been there through thick and thin with me.
She's my ride or die girl.
She's my heart my soul, my smiles and my tears.
She's my everything and that's who I think about when I'm in the hall.

- Gary and Ruby

From The Beat: You speak so highly of your lady and how much you care about her, it's very romantic. Having someone inspire you to do better is great, but be careful of depending too much.

How My Life Changed

Well, my life changed once I first got locked up. I think I broke a piece of my mom's heart as well as my brother's. The first time that I got locked up, I realized that stuff happens. The second time I didn't really care—the only thing I cared about was my mom. But that's the only reason. How my life changed...

-Frosty

From The Beat: We can tell you care so much about your mom and your brother. Do you think you can repair those broken hearts?

Dear Beat,

Hey, what's up Beat? It's your boy Cholo. I'm just here posted doing my time.

I was supposed to get released from the Ranch next month on a perfect program. But I ended up getting into a fight with a rival gang member. I was doing well the whole time but he called me a bithh so I ended up saying, "forget my program" and kicked the guy in the face. So they failed me.

I thought I was going to get more time or have to do it all over again. But I didn't care because I wasn't going to have someone call me that and not do anything. But it is cool because I had court today and I got sixty days of Hall time and sixty days of house arrest. So I'd say it was worth it.

Well, I'm going to let you go now. Be cool until next time.

-Cholo

From The Beat: It's important to stick up for yourself when somebody is in your face. However, what if your punishment had been much worse? Would it still have been worth it? When would you think it would be appropriate not to fight back? We believe it takes just as strong a man to control himself in times of adversity. To be able to not fight back can sometimes be as powerful as retaliating.

Out of Control

To me, life now is much harder than how it was when my parents were growing up because of the gangs. People back then didn't carry guns just to go down the street. It's much worse than it was back then—kids are getting killed just by wearing blue or red. People nowadays say gangs are out of control. Lates.

-Scarface

From The Beat: You speak the truth. These days, kids do get killed for little reasons like colors. We completely agree that gangs are out of control. Do you ever talk to your parents about how it was when they grew up? What were gangs like back then? Is there any way to make it safer for your future children?

RIP Rob

What's crackin'? It's Shabby from the City of San Jose. I want to write about my homeboy Rob. He was out one day doing some grocery shopping with his baby's mom and two-year old son Robert Jr. After coming out of the store, some punk rival pulled a strap on him in front of his family. My boy was never a punk, but in this situation he should've kicked back. He was shot in the face, close range, in front of his son.

It disappoints me how lawless rivals are. To his baby's mom: stay up homegirl. To Rj., his son: your father was a good man. And he died with pride. Rest in peace Robert. We love you.

-Shabbs

From The Beat: Like you said, it's tragic that your boy was killed in front of his family. We can tell you cared because you say the lawlessness disappointed you. How can you fight the lawlessness? Is there any way to stop it? We feel your pain, Shabbs. Keep your head up.

Angel of My Life

Well what-up Beat. Its that crazy stranger from Orange County. Well, I don't feel any of these topics. Well, I am gonna talk about this fine girl that I have in the outs. She is so cute she looks like a rose. She has the body of a model. Every time I go to sleep I think of her I can't get her out of my system and I always picture my kid.

My luck ran out I had to do some time I was down for my crime so I walk the main line inside it eats me up. It's driving me crazy I can't stop thinking about my lady and I want to see my little baby. Then reality hit, this may be the end if I get caught slipping I may never see then again. Picturing her with another man and my boy calling him dad.

I love my boy and my girl I would do anything to stay out cause in a couple of months it's gonna be county time and I am gonna be away even longer.

-Stranger

From The Beat: We can tell these two people mean everything to you and we think it's great that you want to get back on the right track for them. Use your love for them to motivate yourself, how can you be sure to keep it in your mind? Even though you should act to support your family and their image of you as a good man, also act to be true to yourself. Want would you have to do to think well of yourself, and not let yourself down?

Snickers Experience

Sweet chocolate on my teeth, as I munch down on a nice size Snickers bar. Soon after, carmel strings across my mouth as I pull away. The taste of peanut is new to my mouth, for I haven't had it in a while. The mix of the different foods stir around in my mouth while I chew. No wonder this is the most famous candy bar in the world made famous by Baker.

-Peanutopolis

From The Beat: It is nice to read a piece that is so original and not just the usual complaining. Sometimes being denied things makes them that much sweeter, literally.

Gangs Nowadays

To me, my life is much, much harder than my parent's lives 'cause the way life is nowadays, with the gangs.

As for me, I'm in a gang and I love it 'cause they're my family and my homeboys. And back in the day there were gangs but they weren't too crazy as the ones nowadays. So, to me, I kind of think my life is harder than my parent's lives. Well, Beat I'm out for now. Take care.

-Chucky

From The Beat: We find this piece interesting. You say your life is much, much harder because of the gangs but you say you love your gang. Are there more good things or bad things about the gangs? If you had another choice, would you be in the gang you're in?

The Stranger

Last year I went out to Hollister Hills to go four wheeling with my friend. We went on some trails for about two hours until I broke my front left tie-rod and both front tires turned in. I was stuck with no tools and no parts.

After thirty-minutes of sitting a truck drove by and asked if we needed a hand. I said what happened and out of all the people he had the part I needed. We jacked up the front end and put on the new tie-rod and I went to his camp and paid him for the part and the help and drove home before I broke something else.

-Stark

From The Beat: It's amazing how sometimes the perfect person is there when we need them. Does this experience make you think about things like fate, destiny, or someone watching over you? Have you ever been that perfect "stranger" for someone else?

Hoop Dreams

What's up, Beat? Once again, it's your homie M. It's been cool lately, just chillin', getting down on the handball court. Ain't nothing been happening lately—just waiting to get to the other unit for life skills so I can do my time, get out and try to better myself.

I'm going to go school and play basketball and hopefully make it to the NBA. That's my dream and hopefully I fulfill my dream so now I'm in practicing so that when I go back to school I'll be ready for tryouts and hopefully make it. Well, that's it, so late.

- M

From The Beat: Nearly every dream is a good one. It's great that you still have a dream even after all the stuff you have gone through. We believe in you if you believe in yourself. Keep ballin'!

What I think

Well, what's crackin Beat? Me just chillin', bored as hell just waiting to get out. Well, I get out in three more months, but as time passes and it's gets closer and closer to that day, time goes by slow. I hate that a lot. I miss my mom, sisters, and brothers. I haven't seen them for five-months already. I am sort of happy too because my brothers made me an uncle so I have two-nieces.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Congratulations on becoming an uncle! You've got to remember this feeling of missing your family and your excitement about the new members so you can stay out of here next time. What is the first thing you want to want to do with you nieces when you get out?

My Parent's Life

I think my life's harder than my parent's lives. I've lived on my own since I was 15 and neither of my parents had to do that.

My Mom abandoned me at the age and I haven't talked to her since, nor do I want to. My Dad got beat by his dad, but did not hold back to passing down the tradition. I stopped talking to him when I was twelve but eventually started again. In the long run, though, I think I've gone through more than both of them when they were my age. Maybe it's me being ignorant, but I doubt it.

One thing I would have to say is it must have been hard when my Dad's sister hung herself. But then again I have been alienated by my whole family because of my gang. I know my life was harder but maybe I helped it become that way.

-Demon

From The Beat: We don't think you're being ignorant. You sound like one of the most mature people in the Hall. You've been through adversity that may have torn others down. But you're still standing and we believe you can continue to go forward after you get out of here.

Lonely Days, Lonely Night

Thinking of the day I'll be out, but now I pray for the homies that passed away.
These walls are keeping me awake, but they're also keeping me away.
From my family and friends but I'll be okay.
Lonely Days, Lonely Nights in my cell, but just for now.
When I get out no more Lonely Days, no more Lonely Nights.

-Lonely Kollmero

From The Beat: Thanks for this little taste of cell life. Because we see you all together in workshops, we can forget how lonely doing time can be. The loneliness is the thing that gets you thinking about your loved ones right? How do you cope with being so lonely? How do you stay sane and stay up, when you're feeling so down?

Running Gets Old

When I was on the run it was pretty fun.
Actually I been on the run a couple of times.
This last time I tried cocaine for the first time.
Being on the run is fun because you get to do anything you want.
You experience how it is to be living on your own.
The only problems are that you run out of money or that cops keep tripping you out.
You got to watch out for them.
I went on the run because I was going to get locked up so I said screw it.' So I went and had some fun.
After a while it gets old and you eventually get locked up.
Just like MacDre said "Being on the run is no fun" but only after a couple of months running from the police.

-Df

From The Beat: What made being on the run get old? Although having fun is great, we wonder if by being on the run you were avoiding taking responsibility for your actions.

Changes Throughout The World

I think the world has changed for many reasons.

Well first, the gangs in the world I think are increasing. There are many people that are in gangs and they raise their children or others into it, and I think that's sad because the young ones don't have a chance in life, they just follow what they learned. And by that it increases the population of gangs and it's going to increase throughout the years and I think it ain't going to stop! That's why there are lots of killings and problems out there.

The second thing is the hyphy stuff. A lot of people are trying to be black and go dumb and pop pills and all that. That is a lot of change in the world because nowadays there are a lot of people dressing alike and wearing big shirts and all that. I think that is affecting the community because there are more parties and drug use and a lot of drama. I don't know, I think there will be a lot of new thing that will be invented and lots of new style, like the 70s it was all about disco, look at now, things are really changing throughout the years.

-Israel

From the Beat: Fads can change a great deal of what we see in the world, but that means that things can turn around positively as well. But no matter what's around us, there's always the choice to stay level-headed, whether in bellbottoms or sweats.

My Loves

Well what it do to all female's and male's reading this? I want to write about my loves.

I have two main loves, which is my baby's mama Alejandra, soon to be Mrs. R. and my beautiful daughter Alexis.

Well I know that they love me and they know that I love them. And it sucks to be away from them but I'll be out with them in no time. And also baby if you ever read this I want you to know that I'll do the impossible for you and our baby girl too. Also our love is too strong to ever fall apart.

Well peeps see you around. I ain't got much to say 'cause I rather show my love. I love you both. Laters!

-Pato-Madre

From The Beat: We're sorry you're away from the two loves of your life but consider yourself lucky to have at least two reasons to look forward to being out. What are your hopes and dreams for your little girl? Hope you get to see them soon!

My Everything (Remix)

(chorus) If I had the chance to tell you one thing
I would tell you that you're my everything
Everything I think of, everything I do
Everything has to do with you

I want you to remember me for the rest of time
Just take a while listin' to my rhymes
Feelin' like shhh I'm writing this paper
What should I do here now or later
Thinking of solutions to the prob' of my life
Thinking of that one lady I can call a wife
Who should that be, how can I find her
Jane, Christina or maybe Amanda
You're two step a stones one can't pass
Perfect tot he tone of voice to you're ass
Life isn't right at least not now
I'm trying to move on but I don't know how
You got me sprung done hypnotized
I know you're the one when I look in your eyes
This shhh straight right from the deep
Thinking of you I don't go to sleep

(chorus) If I had the chance to tell you one thing
I would tell you t hat you're my everything
Everything I think of, everything I do
Everything has to do with you

Every time I see you walkin' down the street
You seem like the girl I would like to meet
Girl you lookin' so damn fine
You're more like a dolla and not a dime
I see you walkin' lookin' so damn fly
You're that kind of girl that money can't buy
That's why I need to tell you just one thing
I'll be the king and you'll be my queen
What does it take to get to your heart
I bet I got it baby when do you wanna start?
You got my trust if I got yours
And if you get with me then our love will soar
I'll let you think about it if you want to
Just think of me being your boo
We will be happy just us two
Remember one thing I love you

-Anthony

From The Beat: Did you write this song for someone? If you did, you must be crazy about this girl! Who wouldn't want a song written about them?

Change in my Life

My name is Chris, and I'm going to tell you change in my life. I lived in Gilroy and I had lived with my mom for the first year of my life. I would go to school all the time and get good grades. When I started using drugs I started to do bad in school. I was drinking, smoking, and my grades started to go down. My mom was getting calls from the school that I'm in trouble in school.

My mom was mad that I was messing up in school. I had moved to San Jose and started to go to AA meetings every day to do good and to change my life.

I have got a sponsor in the first week of AA. I had started my first step and I had told him I was going to turn myself in the next day.

-Chris

From The Beat: Things may not be where they should be right now, but I think you recognize that it can change for the better, too. And the most lasting changes are in ourselves, how we approach the world. Good luck.

The World

The world has changed
In so many ways
But what you don't know
Is it's all a game

The game we play
It is no joke
You mess up here
And you're on the floor
You'll think your thought
But you really end shhh

The world has changed
In so many ways
But what you don't know
Is it's all a game

The game we play
It's all for fame
You'll do a crime
If you'll do the time
But do it right
And you might be free.

The world has changed
In so many ways
But what you don't know
Is it's all a game

To let you go
With some advice
I'll tell you once
Or maybe twice
Just do your time
Then you're free
To everyone out there
Just stay alive
And don't hurt
Your mom

-Eight-Ball

From The Beat: You're right. A lot about the world is a game, but has very real consequences. Your advice rings true on many levels, and we hope many people listen carefully. Stay strong, and play the game with delicacy and fairness.

Can't wait to get out

Hi Beat. How you been. Me, I can't wait to get out so I can find a job and do something in my life for once. Man, I can't wait to get out of this place when I get out I am going to do better in my life by starting to go to school and go to all my classes and pass high school. When I get out I am going to be some one.

-Gg

From The Beat: These are great goals! Saying them is the first step toward achieving them. Hang onto what you want, don't forget how you're feeling and make a plan, you'll get there.

My Cell

Well, my cell is all right. I'd tell the next screw up: you can watch TV from the bed if you sit right. Also, stay away from the walls 'cause me and my cellie be putting in work. All right then Beat, I'm gonna go.

-Tiny

From The Beat: Those are some good tips for the next occupant of your cell. Tiny, we have to admit, you're a funny guy. Maybe you should use some of those smarts for good and not bad.

Mystery Stars

There's a girl with stars on her wrists
I never thought of something like this
Her smile is shy and sly
From what I can see her eyes are as cute as the sky
Why eye contact behind closed walls
Why couldn't we have met at the mall
I don't get it I have them all
From Asians, black, Mexican, and Puerto Ricans
My ex's send me love letters every weekend
Her smile gives me love sensors
I think I've been locked up too long
Strokin' my chicken with an arm so strong
Thinking man this is wrong
Because some eye contact makes me feel all right
Damn this shhh is so tight
Man I'm just going crazy all night
Over a nice smile and eyes that gleam so bright
To tell the truth this is no game
This is just how I feel every night
But spittin' game is for breakin' hos
Oldies and love song is for true love pros
There's no poisons involved
Just true feeling that needs to be solved
It just started with a wink in the eye
So heat up the fire because a true kiss might come
Instead of wasting your life over a bum
So come to me because it's true love
Because two shy smiles was forced by god up above

-Anthony

From The Beat: Another love poem! You seem to have a lot of these, again with the cryptic messages. But the universality is what makes them strong. Keep writing!

Too Many Days

I got over hundred days to go. I've been on C-level for getting in a fight and now I'm on B-level. So, I haven't been here for a cool minute.

Life skills is waiting and I can't wait' till I get there so I can get my OTS, so I can go to work on the daily. Time to make that money!

Love you mom and dad. Peace and chicken grease.

-B

From The Beat: It sounds like you learned a lesson on c-level. Why do you think so many people want to fight when locked up? Is it because everyone is so frustrated or what?

Life

What's up Beat,this Pink.

I'm sitting in my cell block reminiscing, thinking about all the good times me and my boys had drinkin 40 oz and weed, maybe pop a couple of T's. What's next, I tell my home boys to hit up some beezies now the next step is easy.

We slid through the park, roll up some Bleezy's. As we're yearning, doing our own thing, some cops roll up and tell us to give names, next thing I know I'm getting booked, even in the eyes of my baby's mama, she thinks I'm nothing but a crook. So now I'm thinking it's time to turn away from my past and to make sure me and my son's relationship lasts!

-Pink

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing these important thoughts with us. You can look back on your old life with fondness, but now you see that there is something more important to live and work for. Keep you and your son's relationship in your mind when you make your decisions, it can be the thing that keeps you on track. What do you want this relationship to look ten years from now? How about fifty years from now? You can make it look however you want it to.

Pain I Feel

This pain I feel inside:
stuck in my mind
all this time.
Trying to find the
love from moms and dad.
Sad, using every drug I had.
Who do I turn to?
Who can I trust?
Doing the same thing
over and over again,
committing those sins.
Devils trying to play this little game
trying to make me go insane
and that's fo' sure.
Instead of taking a strap
for my weapon
take my Bible
to lead me through heaven
through those pearly gates
where god awaits me
to promise
paradise city.

-Aztec Chris

From The Beat: Wow, this is a really beautiful and spiritual piece that shows you are trying to elevate in some way.

The System Did Me Dirty

I'm 17-years-old and I go to Mount Madonna High School. I got a lady and she is pregnant.

The reason why I'm here is because my PO did me dirty. He locked me up 'cause I had two dirty bottles for cocaine and for missing over two weeks of school. Yeah, I know that's some bullshhh but what could I do now?

All I know is that when I get out, I'm going to get a my job back at In N Out in Gilroy and get my shhh together because I'm about to be a dad.

This time for sure I'm going to do good because I don't want to lose my lady or my newborn baby. I want to make a change, so I can be somebody and because I'm really sick of getting locked up and making my family sad.

- A

From The Beat: Hmmm, it really doesn't sound like your PO did anything but his/her job, perhaps you should have titled this piece: "I Did Myself Dirty." But you do sound like you want to make a change, and step one of that is to stop blaming other people for your problems.

My Filipino Lady

Well, I'm locked up. I'm just waiting for my court date, waiting to get sentenced. When that happens I'm good because that's one less thing to worry about. Moving to the next subject that goes through my mind: the most important thing in my life is my Filipino lady.

She's been there when times were rough even before we were together, trying to bail me out last time when I was in juvi. I was amazed that she was willing to take her parents money from the bank to bail me out. After I got out, less than a month later, we started going out. I would do anything for her because she shows and gives me the love I crave. She wrote me a letter not too long ago that she might leave back to the Philippines this November or December for good. That tore me up. I would still travel the miles to reunite with her.

-Aztec Chris

From The Beat: Finding someone who would risk so much for you, even before you were actually together sounds like a blessing. You spoke about her parents not accepting your relationship. What do you think you can do in the face of an obstacle like this?

Love

Love people like
Love is also what people hate
Choose wisely is what a mom says
You're young have fun is what a dad says
Girls choose wrong
Boys just choose and make a move
Girls get played
And boys just play
People say forget love and curse good up above
People rejoice with love and think good up above
Screw love then what's to your family
Have love and show it world widely
Choose wrong choose right what to make of the night
Good and evil alleys dark but stars so bright
Reminisce to the stars so bright all damn night
Or choose dark alleys and so hate
So choose your fate
People who hate love, choose by looks
You never bother to read instruction or read the book
Passion is both love and hate
So choose to give or take
Guys are shy and girls are secretive
Nothing but hurt or blame
Just think moms are sensitive and dads are
Strong to strive for endless goals
So think to hand over your heart that is as
Priceless as gold.
Because trust love and feelings is the bolt lock that holds.

-Anthony

From The Beat: There is something very Shakesperean about this poem in the way it alludes to the relationships between young men, women and parents. It could be one of Mercutio's soliloquies from Romeo and Juliet.

If I Die

Persecuted by the world.
All I want is my baby girl braided up in pretty curls.
Keep the fame and fortune, I don't need it,
too many out there want to see me bleeding.
As I wake up stuck in time, all I can do is stay close to God.
God, I know you got a plan for me, but I'd rather wake up next to my family.
Mama, if I die don't want you to lose your mind.
I know they gave me a couple of months,
but when I get out it's gonna be the greatest combat of all times.
I am a lil' sad because my horoscope said that my girl found a new man.

-Armando

From The Beat: You send us an interesting collection of thoughts. We can see that your mind is on your priorities of your family these days and not "fame and fortune." Your ability to recognize what's important to you is impressive, don't lose sight of these things. How do you make room in your life to keep your family your priority?

Rage

Rage is crazy and out rages looking crazy, feeling crazy. Everything around us is wacked if you look at it as unusual. Everywhere we go some people are insane, or they go crazy. They go from mad to insane to rage.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It's interesting that you connect rage with insanity here. We think it's true that intense anger can make you temporarily lose your mind and act in response to your emotions. How do you manage to keep your head when you're enraged?

Game

My attire acquires an abundance of admirers.
An eager encounter with a coward
might just end up expired.
I'm tired of being called a god-damn fugitive
from heaps of heartless ignorant fools
that obviously don't want to live.
This is the shhh
that comes straight
from the depths of my heart.
I physically and consciously put shhh together,
but they stay stifling and constantly fall back apart
resulting in restrictive resurrection from the start.
Gangstas now act like marks:
what kind of man kills someone
in front of kids playing in the park?
Master mind nonchalant outrageous behavior
relinquishing the provocative evilness inside
turning to my gun for my savior
withstanding the stereotypical
scandalous fools we call haters.
Who says you can't live life in clarity, if you ain't a playa?
I'm a gangsta obligator without obligation for favors.
My adolescent obscenity has a
history that's too explicit to even write down on paper.
It's game time boy, it ain't time to rewind.
I'm consistently contemplating on the shhh
that goes on in my mind,
thinking about change
but I guess I'm too blind.
It's so evident that it's a vestige
wistfully impudent a disease,
wishing to never become homogenized
and successfully bent, I live in repent
cause I know I can never go back,
to heaven, is where my prayers are sent
but I realize I still got shhh that I lack!

- Smiley

From The Beat: You are a serious rhymesayer, so don't waste the talent on the streets. It seems like there are inklings in your piece about making a change, so follow that thought and switch lanes.

Look at Me Now

Two years ago, I would always say 'I will never get locked up.' Now, I'm in here looking at all the things I used to do with my homeboys. When I was a young teen, I started doing crazy things with my homie Lil' L. We would always drink with other homies.

Now almost all the homies are locked up but we are still standing, waiting to get out so we can kick it without POs tripping. I'm 17 years old now and I would never take anything back.

-Eddie

From The Beat: It's good not to regret the crazy things you do as a young person, but there is a difference between regretting and making a positive change.

What It's like

Well, I ain't really feeling the topics so I'm gonna write about what I'm going through right now. I went to court today and ain't got court until May 8th so I'll be sitting until then. Well I ain't really got shhh else to say – so to all in here, stay up and remember there's a time and place for everything, so don't get caught slipping. Much love and respect.

-Young G

From The Beat: We hope you did more than just sit for the past few weeks. We encourage you to take advantage of the time you have in here.

Revenge

I love revenge,
the inside of you feels good
to know you got somebody back.
To let dem know you ain't the one to be messin' around with.
For some reason revenge feels so good.
But revenge can also lead to bad things,
getting locked up or when someone gets back at you.
What goes around comes around.

-Fd

From The Beat: Wow, a good observation of how revenge can cause us pleasure as well as others pain. Not every person your age can see these two sides of revenge. How can or do you reconcile these two sides? How can you feel justified without causing others the same pain you're going through?

Loss, Revenge, Forgiveness

When I was real young, maybe foru or five, I had a friend from down the street come over to play toy army men. I had to go to the bathroom and when I came back to the living room he was gone with all my toy army men. I was pretty mad and I told my mom that next time I saw him I'd "kick his butt" for it. She understood my want for revenge and told me so. She then taught me to forgive. My mom told me to go to his house and ask him politely to give them back. So I did, and he said he never had them. Then like my mom said to do, I forgave him and left empty-handed. I thought what I had done was good so I felt good about it for the next couple years. I was a naturally forgiving person.

Eventually I realized that forgiveness was looked down upon by my peers and all the kids around me. No one recognized it except my mom and that wasn't enough for me to allow people to walk all over me. One day I decided I was tired of forgiving. I could bear to be without the people who needed my forgiveness. After a while I had people on my good and bad side and I started to be open about my disapproval for people. My friends thought it was funny so I kept it up and was harsher about it. I was never a bully but I was a jerk sometimes. And I always enjoyed getting people back. Revenge and forgiveness are the fruits of life. One will be natural and ones taste needs to be acquired. I'm fully capable of both. If everyone was super forgiving, the world would be boring.

From The Beat: You recognize a good point here—the things that feel "right" are not always that things that are accepted by our peers or by society. How can we decide what to choose? How do you decide? Does the approval you get from your friends for your new behavior make you feel better about your new lack of forgiveness?

I Got It Made

You ask me if I think my life is easier than my parent's lives. My response to that is, "Hell No!" My parents came from Mexico—do you know how hard it is to live in Mexico?

My parents came here to have a good life. It took them awhile, but they finally did it. I sometimes think I got it hard because I'm always getting locked up, going through so much shhh. And at the same time my parents got my back. So you tell me who has it harder. Yeah, thought so.

To my moms and pops, "Love you and see you next visit."

-Rodrigo

From The Beat: This piece is very refreshing, Rodrigo. The majority of the answers to this question were that people's lives were harder than that of their parents. You definitely are humble in that even though you know you have it rough, you acknowledge your parents did too.

Shattered Glass

The pain I make
If I want I take
It was for you but now you I hate
The pain I forced was tears like shattered glass
Every peak is a painful forsaken faze
You put me in circular maze
You shook my heart with a crave
I thought it was me but you're crazed
Its like a David Cooperfield haze
The things you do and did hurting many ways
I've forsaken you and your life's in vain
These useless but powerful words can open eyes
And not choose for only for big ass thighs
But for that one subject inside
Pimp is what I was
Player individual macking pimp
But if you mock me your feelings I'll take
And make you the one I hate
She thought my feelings were there to break
But her mind is what I did manipulate
She didn't realize I was always in first place
All some do is rush so there will be no trust
In a relationship trust is a must
For an everlasting ecstasy rush
So don't try to play me because my shirt I'll brush

-Anthony

From The Beat: You seem to have mastered the slightly-mean love poem, whose purpose is to declare that you are better than the subject of the poem. Maybe you should switch it up and try a poem in which you are humble.

Thanks and Take Care

Aye, what's up Beat? This is the homeboy Whiteboy.

Today I'm not going to write about any of the topics. But one of my biggest fears is letting my son, lil' Daniel, ask me what my tattoos mean, because then he is going to do the same shhh! I do gang-banging, living the gangster life. And I hope my big brother Chino will stop messing up. I'm going to try my best to try to raise my son the right way and take care of my family.

Well Beat, by the time everybody reads this I'll be at the Ranch. To the Beat, it was an honor writing to you guys, even though you didn't put half of my stuff in and wish me luck with my son. Alrato.

- Whiteboy

From The Beat: Maybe you can tell your son about your tattoos, but in a way that shows him that it's not the way to go. Being a good example for your son doesn't mean you have to avoid talking about your tattoos. Being honest can be great. Tell him why you did the things you did, and also how you eventually realized it wasn't right, and decided to turn your life around. It's been an honor to have your writing in The Beat. We wish you the best with your son and family.

Is your life easier – or harder – than your parents' life?

Well I think life is harder for my parents than for me because my parents have to support us and work hard to put food on the table and keep a roof on our heads. I think my life is very easy because all I have to do is just go to school and make trouble for them and be on the streets everyday.

- Lil' G

From The Beat: How about trying to make your parents' life easier? For sure they will always have to work hard to support you guys and all, but you can help them out a lot by not making trouble for them and supporting them in right ways. If you do that, life will get a little easier.

Thoughts

I'm tired of
hoping and wishing
waitin' and dreaming,
that's why I'm constantly
plotting and scheming,
so when you see me
you better pray to god, ya best believe
'cause I'm walking with demons
they in my head and won't quit
hollering and screaming,
so I'm gonna raise hell as long as I'm breathing
and I ain't following, I'm leading.
A rebel without a cause or a reason
so cold blooded
my heart freezing
filled with sick thoughts
and intricate plots
I'm somewhat satanic
that why when they see me
they panic
forever a gang bang addict.

-Lonely

From The Beat: It is interesting that say that these demons are the ones who make you do bad things, while others blame the streets. Does anyone take responsibility on themselves?

I Will Overcome

All that I have seen, all that I have done
All that I've been through, I will not complain.
All that may be. All that may come.
I will not complain. I will overcome.

-Shabbs

From The Beat: Simply beautiful. This piece is one of the most striking we've read—it says so much in four lines. If this is the kind of stuff you have inside of you, never stop letting it out.

Smiley Beats

Elaborating on my decision making
growing up as a gangsta
will never leave my life forsaken.
I look at my choices and realize rehabilitation
is up for the taking
but it'll never come into grasps
cause of what I'm constantly facing.
My thoughts are consistently racing
but with nowhere to go
if you's a smart mutha…
you'd know you reap what you sow
so I stay smiling and let that seem
to be the only emotion I show,
but in realization,
mind, body and soul
there's teeth grinding screaming spirits inside
that I want to let go.
I'm wicked and constricted
to everything evil can be
looks can be deceiving
don't ever let that be a factor
that you never forsee.
Rest in peace to mi carnals,
that unfortunately fell victim to these streets
I'm out – I hope you like these smiley beats!!!

- Smiley

From The Beat: Again, you express so beautifully that you can't make a change, but it seems as though your intellect and verbal style might even be more powerful than then all that you're "constantly facing." We believe that you can do it.

The Lost One

One day I'm happy—and some days I'm not. My life's been controlled since the day I got caught. My face shows no sorrow—neither no pain. Can't open my door man, this shhh's the same. More crazy experience—I just can't forget. Been here so long—and still feel regret. Can God forgive me for all that I've done? I may be the black sheep—but I'm still your son.

-Looney

From The Beat: What a touching message, a way to reach out and speak to your father? Mother? It's a good practice to write things down that we want to say to others, so that we don't sit on and stew over them. Your thoughts here show some deep reflection on your life and your situation. Keep it up.

Life Is Harder

My life is harder than my parents because I have to work hard to stay out of trouble and I have to keep watching my back for people trying to run up and stick me or something. It was easier to get a job back then. So overall it's harder now.

-Diego

From The Beat: We admire the fact that you work hard to stay out of trouble. Still, do you know for a fact that it wasn't hard for your parents to stay out of trouble? Was it hard for them to get jobs? Have you talked about what life was like for them when they were young? We hope you continue to work hard, Diego.

Bad Influence

What's up Beat. It's me Pit again. Just goin' to give you
this quick flow about how I am a bad influence on my
younger sibling. And if it don't get published it's cool...
I look back on my family and ask my self how can this be,
I have followed the steps of my older brothers and I
turned wrong and look at my mother, she is crying
always asking me why am I lying and still doing crimes,
I am giving a bad influence on my younger siblings.
They're growing up around a lot of killing,
my mom tells me why don't I stop.
I keep replying I just can't let it drop.
My little brother is doing good so far,
but how long can he make it before it gets hard,
and he starts to struggle and the problems on his
shoulders starts to double,
because he's seeing his older family running wrong in
these crazy streets,
I got to give my younger ones a positive mind,
so that they won't go wrong and do a lot of crimes.

-Pit

From The Beat: Your piece is a good reminder that almost all of us have people looking up to us and that they will learn from our example. The fact that you realize this is impressive, but will you change your ways? Is your concern for your brother strong enough to turn you into the influence that you obviously think you should be?

Changes

Hey what it do? This ya boy Gato. Well some things that have changed in my life are me in general, I have grown, I don't look the same I look older and I have a baby girl and a future wife but I'm stuck here and I can't be supportive at this moment, but my other change is that I'm going to stay out of the streets and get me a job and go back to school.

Well Beat until next time. Baby, I love you, and you too, Alexis.

-Gato Madre

From the Beat: Real change comes from within. Even if the world around us seems to fall apart, you can change for the better in your heart and mind. Good luck with your loves.

My Life

Hey Beat, what's cracking" Well tonight I want to talk a lil' about my life because the way I see it everyone looks at me like a lil' boy with tattoos an his face, but they don't know about how I was rise and some just don't care and I used to be that type I can't lie.

Ever since my family and some of the homeboys been in a casket and me being locked up ever since the age of 11 years old until now. I'm 15, still locked up and still fighting a case since 2006 it seems like they are never going to get off.

Let me tell you when I first got into all this mess it was back then before I even knew my real family. I was in a foster home when I first got into a fight. It was because I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. When I was walking from school it was late when I was going home and I heard some one crying behind a trash can in the school and I went to see what is it and it was a guy with some girl with a gun to her. When I seen that I was shocked I just jumped on him with a knife in my hand. Boom, one shot to my left leg, blood was all over me but it was not my blood it was the girl that was laying on the ground. I passed out into a coma.

Tell you more next time.

-Steven

From The Beat: What a terrifying experience! We don't often forget moments like that, and it's brave of you to share it with us. How has being in that position shaped your feelings about the system and life in general?

Screwed Over

Q-onda Beat Within. Pues, I don't know what to write about so I'm going to write about how my PO screwed me over and told me if I fail the ranch that it was gonna be my last chance.

Pues, the list for James is hella long and the ranch is full so it's gonna be a little bit before I leave. But what has me really thinking the most is that one more fight and I'm gone. I ain't tripping but I'm just trying to do good so I could get out.

Pues, with that been said hope you put this in The Beat. Alrato.

-Hersheys

From The Beat: Sounds like you're feeling some anger about your situation. You say you're trying to "do good" so that you can get out, which is great, but make sure your getting that anger out too. We've heard from some guys that try to bottle up their anger that they can lose control of it and it can come out at some bad moments. How do you think you can respect your feelings while still following the rules? We recommend writing it down or even just thinking it through. We don't want the system to turn you into an angry person, so process it while you can, and when you get out, you won't become bitter.

I'm gone

What up? This is that homeboy Cash. Well I'm leaving for the Ranch. I've been here since the beginning of December. Now I got six to eight more months to do. I met hella cool homies in here. To all, do your time and get out.

I thank God for giving me Ranch time, but then again I'm here for something I didn't do. Maybe God wanted me to take some time from me from those evil streets. Either way, I love God as I love my family.

To all, hope to see you in the outsTake care. Adios.

- Cash

From The Beat: We like you main point – do your time and get out. Just remember that it sounds simple, but will be hard to do. But I can tell that you have a lot of faith in God and family. They will carry you through. So stay up and we know that you will succeed.

Always Watching My Back

Q-vote Beat. Well I'm going to write about being on the run. The things I don't like are that I always gotta watch my back. I never know when a cop might roll by and pull me over for curfew, or anything else.

Also, I never know where I might be the next couple of hours, or the next day. It could be locked up, with my dad, or somewhere else, and then I know I'm gonna get caught and come back here. The things I do when I'm on the run is - I don't go to school. I could smoke, drink, and party when I want. I don't gotta be home at a certain time. I could kinda do whatever I want. Well Beat, I ran out of time. Alrato.

-Becky

From The Beat: When you don't know where your next meal is coming from, or where you're going to sleep, the other freedoms aren't quite as enjoyable, are they? Especially when you waste all that time drinking and smoking and partying. We all want something to show for our lives. We hope you've learned a lesson or two along the way. It's a lot better to be watching what's going on in front of you than having to worry about what's going on behind your back.

Change

Here I am back in juvenile hall for the fifth time. Hating it. I'm tired of this place. Tired of waking up hella early to the counselors on the loud ass speaker, tired of this food, tired of these walls, tired of these people, just plain tired.

I hate this place but I keep bringing myself back. Started as a young teen and I'm now 18 years old. Had my 18th birthday in here. That was nice.

I hate seeing my grandma cry every time I see her. I think about her at home alone every night. Tired of putting her through this. It gets old. I just wanna get out already and start a new life - no more of this kid shhh. This ain't for me. I ain't a criminal, never been.

I am looking at about 3 ½ more months. I know it ain't bad but doing time goes by slow. July 7th, I'll be free, without probation, and I know I'll be okay. Never see my face again. For now I'm here to stay, for a while, but they can't keep us forever. It's up to us to stop this pattern. I'm tired of living this life. It ain't for me. It's time for a change. I'm ghost Beat.

-Genovieve

From The Beat: The big question is: why. Why do you keep repeating the behavior that leads to juvy. It's probably the same behavior that could lead to county or to prison. What are you going to do about it? Your grandmother won't be happy until you've figured out how to end the cycle. Honesty would be the best palce to start.

Court

I had court today. I got sentenced to six months hall time / life skills. I can't really complain, but I at least wanted time served.

I have been here for three months and I'm barely getting started. Shady biz, but I will finally touch some light in October.

When I get out I'll go to college and pursue my lawyer career. I've always been known for debating an issue and being a very confident, strong speaker who has the traits of a lawyer. I want to study the law more than anything.

So while I'm in here, I'll educate myself, and then beat the white man at his own game. I'll help all my people who are struggling from racism and injustice, so the community, in my eyes, will be a better place.

-Yung Sha T

From The Beat: Study hard. You have a big job to do. But it's a good job. We'll be looking for your name in the newspapers, in about seven or eight years. Young Attorney Wins Civil Rights Case. Good luck.

Family

My life is way easier than my parents' life. Because my mom started working since she was old enough to. She always tells me I should enjoy my life because all I have to do is do my homework and clean my room. Then she gets into all the hard work she had to do ever since she can remember.

-Juan

From The Beat: Looking at others' lives is often a good way to gain perspective about our own. Sounds like your mom helps you to find the perspective to be grateful for what you have. Do you feel grateful and lucky? Does it help you to think about what your parents have been through?

My Life is Changin'

What's up Beat readers? Its me that one and only Chicano named Nemo. I'm writin' today bout how my life is always changing. Lately I've changed the way I think. Like for instance before I used to be an angry person. Just mad at the world because I never had a dad. But now that I'm growin' up I'm pretty happy. Another thing that I changed is the way I look at things. Now I think before I react to people 'cause I don't want to say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing.

The most important thing that has changed in my life is that I'm a father of a beautiful baby girl. Damn she means the world to me. I'm planning on doin my best just to be there for her I'm plan on getting a job and goin to J.R. College so I can get a good job for the future.

Well I'm gonna cut it here. Thank you all for takin' time to read this. Much love. Alrato.

-Nemo

From The Beat: These are some deep and valuable reflections about yourself. Are you happier with yourself now that you think differently and think about your actions more? We think it's great that you want to be a good example for your little girl, but make sure you're acting in a way that makes you proud of yourself too. When we are the people who we seek to be, we can not help but inspire and help others along the way.

To You

I pray that you're doing well.
I pray that you're not sad.
I pray that you'll be feeling better.
I pray that you stay strong.
I pray that you will be out again.
I pray for your loved ones,
for the family who have passed.

-Ira

From The Beat: This is a tight poem, Ira, filled with so much passion and hope. You truly are a beautiful writer.

A Changing World

The world had changed a lot from the 90's. Now that it is the 2K there are iPods, iPhones.

When I was in middle school in San Jose we walked around with Tape-players with cassettes. There really wasn't even cell phones. MetroPCS just hit San Jose and people started getting connected.

I was still being a villain having quarters in my pocket next to some lint and a cassette player clipped to my belt.

Well, that's my last Beat so all stay up.

-VBird

From The Beat: It's true that technology is a big reason that our society has changed. Do you think society is better off with people so well connected or has is brought changes that you don't agree with or don't like? Have we lost anything from our "tape-player" society of the past?

I Can

Hey Beat! It's Krissy again and I'm gonna be talking about how I'll be released soon, hopefully.

I've been in here for a while and finally I get to have a chance to turn my life around and just stop doing the things I'd do that'd get me back here. I knew that I'd have to face the real world again. The thing people kept on telling me is that I'd be back here soon again, and that I'd fail my program. But that's all talk. I'm going to change my ways and just try to prove to everyone it's possible. I'm going to quit doing drugs and just get my life back on track.

Well, I guess that's it for now... till the pencil meets the paper again.

-Krissy

From The Beat: The voice you need to be listening to now is in your head. That voice is telling you that you can, and you will, do what you need to do to stay clean and sober. Also, to go along with your good intentions, you need to be surrounding yourself with people who know what they're talking about. So, we hope you're ready to work with sympathetic people who've been around the block with your issues.

Starting To Stress

What's up Beat? Well, it's that one girl in the honor unit with the pretty green eyes. Anyways - a lot of stuff been on my mind lately. It's starting to stress me out. First of all my man hasn't written me for a while and that's kind of messed up. But it's okay. I'm still keeping my head up, hoping he waits for me and stays faithful. I really don't want to let this one go.

Second of all, well, the ranch is stressing me out. There are too many girls on that list and I'm on the bottom. So I'm not bouncing for a while. Hopefully my man is here for me because he knows how it feels. Damn, I miss him. Well Beat - that's it for now.

-Bird's Lady

From The Beat: One way to keep your mind off of the stressful things is to focus it on worthwhile things that are available to you in the hall. Last time we looked, there were books to read. We've said it before, and we'll say it again and again. When you're reading a good book, time seem to fly. You don't want the book to end. So – start reading.

Changed

Yeah, the world has changed with this new technology, with these Motorola metro phones. It's pretty cool. I think you can have camera phones meet people and send each other pictures, but if you ask me – you can have everything in the world but the one thing you need that I miss having is freedom. I miss my ex-girlfriend that maybe is cheating on me, hope not.

-Camacho

From The Beat: Wait, is she your ex? If she is your ex, how can she be cheating on you? It's funny how sometimes we want to keep those people who we no longer have in our lives.

Nothing Is Different

Nothing is different but me. I have changed a lot. I don't talk that much anymore and have turned into a quiet person. Before I got here, I got mad easily—even a little thing could drive me crazy but now I'm not like that anymore. I always try to calm myself and just let it go no matter what. I think these months in here will make me better and make me a good person.

-Giang

From The Beat: Giang, not many people look at this ordeal as an experience that can bring good to a person's life. You have a very impressive attitude towards the Hall. If you keep your attitude and continue to control your emotions, we know you will become the good person that you want to be.

Irritation

Lately I've been getting irritated from being in this unit. I can't stand being away from my family and being stuck with these same females. I have a feeling that I'm soon gonna burst, explode, go off at someone.

I mean I know I'm young but at least I act my age and I'm not pretending to be something I'm not. I can't stand people who are fake and who are older than me but act like they're two years old.

I don't think this boosie unit could go one day without some kind of drama. Females up in here be trying to push my buttons, but once they do, they're gunna regret it. That's why when they just keep running their mouths I just keep laughing - because all they're doing is making themselves look like a fool, and trying to keep the focus off themselves. But it's ok because I know who I am, and I got my girls by my side, and we go. So that's whats up with me.

-Tatiana

From The Beat: We suggest you spend some of that time and energy you've invested in being "ticked off", and try to figure out why you are so easily annoyed. You don't have to participate in the juvenile behavior of others. You could be reading a book. But if you walk around with an attitude that says, in effect, "hit me, and you'll see what happens", you know you're going to find someone to "hit" you. You can't control others, only yourself. Focus inward T. That's where you'll find peace.

Being On The Run

One of today's topics is being on the run. The last time I was on the run I was out for three months.

I was sent to a group home in early September, and I ran September 15. I ran because I got in a fight.

The group home I went to was in Morgan Hill. My friend went to pick me up at around 7:00 pm. I wanted to go earlier but he told me to wait, so I had to because I didn't want to hitch a ride. So exactly at 7:00 pm I ran out the back door and that's when I got my warrant.

The first thing I did was go to my best friend's house. I spent the first night there. The next day, Sunday, I went home.

I had to wait until November for my brother Browny to get out. As soon as my brother got out I started kicking it more in his hood at Mike's Pizza.

My first month I was on the run I really didn't go out. Then I stopped caring and I started to party. I thought the cops were not going to catch me.

In October I went to Mexico. We were there for about 2 weeks. It was fun. On our way back to the U.S. I was scared because they asked me for my I.D. I gave it to the border patrol. He ran my name. He said I had a warrant but since I was with a relative, he let me go.

In November my brother finally got out. I was very happy. We started to hang out a lot. I was going to his house daily.

In December my brother and I decided to get a "g" ride. We had the car for a few days. On that day, I went to pick up my homegirls and we decided to go to a night club in Sunnyvale. My brother Browny told me not to go, but I wanted to go have fun. So I was driving to Sunnyvale and we were all having fun. As I parked the car a cop was pulling out of the parking lot. I thought that he had not run the license plate, but he did. As soon as my friends and I got off and started walking, he flipped a u-turn and stopped us. I gave a fake name but the cop did a tattoo check. They took me to the Sunnyvale Police Department and then brought me to juvie and I've been here since.

Well Beat, this is my story for now.

-Angela

From The Beat: That's a pretty detailed story, and we appreciate it. You got to see a bit of Mexico, and you hung out with family, but in the long run, was it worth it? You might have been free by now if you'd stuck with your program. But here you are. We can only hope that you have learned some good things from the experience. Have you?

Believe It Or Not, I Don't Care

Why are people so stupid to believe rumors? Just 'cause they hear this or they hear that, they automatically think it's true. To be honest, I can really give an ant's ass if they believe me or the rumors, 'cause I don't need people in my life thinking I'm someone or something I'm not. I know the truth and that's the only thing that matters, so I'ma do it moving on these haters/fakers/believers of rumors, 'cause life is tough but rumors will never break me down, and that's the truth. Bee-lee-dat.

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: Even if you can simply maintain, can you still in your heart forgive those who misjudged you and talked about you behind your back, and learn to trust them and be their friend again?

I think that my life in a way has been harder than my mom's because of gangs. It's been hard for me because I'm too much into the gangs and drugs.

RIP Mark

One night me and my homies was walkin' and these girls was about to fight. They keep talkin' and not fighting. Me and my homies said, " Y'all weak," and this girl name Me Me took off her coat and said, " Do you want to see me?" And homegirl Lo Lo said, " It's whatever," so they start fighting. My potna Lo Lo drop Me Me off, so they stop fighting. I pick up Me Me's coat and I find a Ipod and I'm like, this me (mine).

So we walk back to the block, and guess who came? The police. I'm doin' it big and I'm not worrying about them. It was all good until my little sister start crying. My homie Drake said, "Mark dead"--that messed up my whole night. I was hot.

-Wallnut

From The Beat: We're so sorry that you lost him. Why don't you write The Beat next week more about who your homie was, what you two did as friends together, and what happened about his death and what his loss means to you?

Message

To the next person to be in my room, cell #2—beware of the ghost. If you don't write on her walls, then he won't kill you. Ha ha ha. but, yeah, to all the new fresh females, don't be stupid and come back. If it's your first time, then you betta learn from your mistake fast… like a NASCAR, 'cause this bunk place ain't the place to be at. And don't get caught cuddling with these lil' ass boys (not occurring to all, just some.) Don't get EBT (early bed time) or TRG (temporarily removed from program.) So yhea, stay up to all that.

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: Good advice to the next young woman who will be staying in your room in juvy after you leave. What's up with the ghost? Is he menacing you, or are you in control of him, getting him to tell you funny, sad, even tragic stories about the people who have lived in your room?

Easier or harder!

What's up, Beat? Today's topic is our life's being harder or easier than our parents.

Well, my life has been easy and hard at the same time, more than my mom's. I think that my life in a way has been harder than my mom's because of gangs. It's been hard for me because I'm too much into the gangs and drugs. I don't regret myself getting jumped in a gang and doing the drugs I've done, because all of that has changed me.

The gangs have made me dress different and kick it with the people I kick it with. The drugs I've been involved with has changed me--the way I act. I've been locked up in and out hella times, and that's something that never happened to mi jefita (my mother).

At the same time, I realize that my life has been a lot easier than mi jefa's. I say this because my mom had four kids and out of all four kids, three of them have been locked up in and out hella times. My older brother has been locked up in and out of county jail practically all of his adult years. My older sister had been locked up in the halls that I'm in right now, but back in the days. Now mi carnal is 24,'bout to be 25, and mi carnala is 22, 'bout be 23.

I'm eighteen years old. I just turned 18, like 6 days ago, and I'm still going to be on juvenile pro. I've been here since March 21, and I'm about to get out, like, in May 5. But, yeah, anyways, my mom has suffered so much from all three of us getting locked up. A week before I got locked up this time, she was in the hospital because she wasn't able to see anymore. She was in the hospital for about a week and the doctor told her that she was legally blind.

After that, she got out from the hospital and mi carnala brought her home. She got to the house around 3:00. The sheriffs came to my house to get me the day que mi jefa got out of the hospital.

When the cops had told me to turn around and put my hands behind my back, she started crying. I felt hella bad because she had just got out of the hospital. Anyways, my point is that mi jefa has had a harder life then mine.

-Shyboy

From The Beat: You always write straight out of your heart. If you had just read this piece as if someone else had written it, what advice would you give the writer? Maybe stay in school? Get a job? Hang with your younger brothers and sisters? If not, what should the writer do?

Back Again

What good, Beat? I am back again. I hope my girl is waiting for me. When I get out I am going to find a job so my family can be happy. I need a change is what I need, but this is a big step for me.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Okay, good for you. What kind of a job would you like? Are you still going to school? What other changes do you want to make? Do you know some older homies who have already made the changes you are considering? Can you watch them or ask them how they did it, and create your own version of what they did? Do you want to talk to a job counselor? If so, can you set yourself up now?

Life As I See It

Life as I see it is different in many ways. Your life can change in seconds. One minute you're free, then the next, you're in the cell locked up, with all your freedom gone.

-Ryan

From The Beat: A lot of youth write that they never seriously considered having to go to juvy when they were messing up, so suddenly becoming locked up, for hours, days, months, can, as you write, be frightening to the bone. Is that what happened to you?

Easy For Us

To be honest, I think us teens got it easy, even though we is in here locked up. We still got it easy, 'cause we got a whole life more to live.

Adults (my mom) has been through a lot--not only has she been through a lot, I've put her through a lot of shhh. She's tried to give me and my lil' big brother everything she could, and I feel bad, 'cause we've put her through shhh. But when I still think we got it easy--we don't gotta pay bills, worry 'bout taxes or other stuff--we just go to school, have fun, and live life.

-Queen Bee

From The Beat: When you write that your brother and you have given your mother a lot of trouble, you know that isn't right, so when you're free again, how can you stop all that mess and help her out?

All My Family Is In Honduras Except Me

My life start when a day I think I have go to the United States from my country, Honduras. But I start working because my family need some money and I stay. I have to work for three (of my seven) brothers because my family, they suffer for my brothers and me. I like I know my family care about me because some people never care about his family, but I think I got good parents, so you know I have (been) doing better, because I don't want these people to send me to (an)other place again. All my family is in Honduras, except me, because me…

-Kenny

From The Beat: When you're ready, why don't you write about your family in Honduras, your young life there, how you came to the US alone, and what your life here is like now? We'll help you…

My Trip To Guatemala

When I was a young teen I went to Guatemala with my cousin, who was also a young teen. We flew together on the airplane. We stayed with my grandparents in San Carlos Siga. We were there a month. It's different than the US because the stores are outside, but we didn't party, go fishing, or go shopping. We didn't do anything. I'm sad and I don't want to talk about it any more.

-Lavonte

From The Beat: When you're feeling better, why don't you write more about your trip to Guatemala, where your family is from, or about anything at all?

Life Goes On

No matter what, I can't leave.
I'm stuck until they tell me.
I don't belong here.
I'm a lot smarter than this.
I have worked for so much
Just to have it all end like this.

-Sean

From The Beat: It sounds like you're talking to yourself in this poem. Has it been a good lesson for you to be in a situation where others are pretty much completely controlling your circumstances? But, luckily for you, you will get to go home, and, hopefully, you won't be back here ever again.

SANTA CRUZ

"…Like A Language Perfectly Spoken"

You're my love. You're all I got. God, send me a blessing from up above.. I miss my family and my girlfriend. I won't fight the feeling, just flow with the wind.

Being locked up has me feeling like a small bug stuck in a web. You're my best friend. Soon we'll be together forever. All I need is patience. You were like my shadow. I thank the Lord that I have you. I love you. Nothing will change my attitude.

I'm sorry for all the times I was rude. I'm sorry you're all alone at home. But your heart is hard as stone. You always gave me hope. We'll manage. We always understood one another, like a language perfectly spoken.

-S

From The Beat: You're a lucky fellow – to have found someone who understands you, and you her. That's worth changing for, isn't it? No matter how well you get along on the outs, you can't carry on a relationship from behind locked doors. Time for you to get serious, S. The world doesn't wait, at least not for long.

Being Locked Up

Being locked up, what are you going to do if a family member dies?
You missed everyone's birthday. But you tell yourself it's alright – it's part of being a G. But now you're all alone, living in a cage, away from home.
Life's gone. I can't remember when I last saw the stars and the moon
because I'm locked up in my room.
If I had another chance, I'd try to change – for my loved ones.
It might be hard, but it was all worth it.
I hate being locked up with a bunch of hard headed punks.
I'm here for something I didn't do. But I know I'll be out soon.

-Sinner

From The Beat: You raise some good points. But we're thinking it will only turn out to have been 'worth it' if you leave the hall with some hard learned lessons. Being a G isn't worth it. The sacrifices are too great. The benefits too small. Would you want your children to be Gs, or do you think they deserve a better life than that? We all know the answer.

Blessing

This might be a blessing in disguise.
This is what I get when I get into a fight.
You can even feel it in the wind.
It traps me up as if I were in a spider's web.
The blessing is: I'm learning patience.
Even though I live in the shadow of macho men,
I don't have to share their attitude.
Even if they act as hard as stone.
Though it looks like I am full of despair
I am learning the language of hope.

-Alex

From The Beat: Life lessons can come in all forms, even poems. Good writing Alex. That's a good language you're learning. Practice it every day. Become eloquent in it.

Being locked up has me feeling like a small bug stuck in a web.

In Appreciation

Well Beat, I'm just letting you know that I am so glad for the program that you guys are running. I really appreciate what you guys are doing to try to help out us youths. So I am letting you Beat and Beaters know that I am going home soon. And I am really interested in knowing how or what I can do to get The Beat sent to my house. So please let me know what's up. It has been a pleasure writing to The Beat and also, reading what other people have to say!

- Inocente

From The Beat: We've enjoyed working with you and we're very glad you appreciate our efforts. We're also glad that you're going home. And we hope that you'll keep wring those fine poems. When you get serious about your writing, good things come out of that pencil. We wish you much good luck. You can follow what's going on at The Beat by going to: www.thebeatwithin.org Please keep in touch with us.

Chillin'

What's up Beat.
I'm chillin' like a villain
and enjoyin'...
feelin' dope as penicillin.
Yeah, I'm over half way done with my term
here at the hall. Been here over six months
with three more to go.
I'm good, just posted
and with nothing much to say,
except: what's up.

-J

From The Beat: Well, at least you've said not much with style. That counts for something. If you read your way through these next three months, they'll fly. Time goes into overdrive when you're reading a good book. Give it a try.

To Me...

To me the world is all good. The only bad thing is some people are really poor and have to do bad stuff to get money, like sell drugs, steal, or rob people. But that's not our fault. We are too poor and have nothing better to do.

-O

From The Beat: Poverty is society's crime, but we still have choices. Stealing, robbing, and selling drugs is the wrong response. That kind of response to poverty lands you in juvy, and maybe ultimately in prison. Poverty is a huge problem and it won't be solved by using the excuse that you have nothing better to do that rob people.

It Could Be Worse

You could be on top of the world
but it's still screwed up.
Workin' two jobs and you still ain't savin' up.
Thinkin' to myself – I'm sick of this shhh,
I need to hit a bank real quick 'n get rich.
Or somethin', man. I think back and reminisce
to mellow times when we were all kids.
Didn't really have to worry about big things.
Just had dreams of livin' in castles, like kings.
Then life caught up with me, and reality.
Thinkin' life could end – damn – now it's real to me.
The world ain't perfect
but I could think of worse things.
So I say we kick back
and see what the future brings.

- K

From The Beat: Righto... but don't forget, life is a cooperative venture with time. It's not just what the future brings to us, but also what we bring to the future. Don't go empty handed, if you'd like to have a say in the way things turn out.

This World

This world's messed up.
So many things in this world
that make you wanna burst.
Mom got raped.
I wanna kill anybody
that would wanna harm her.
I was a rain drop,
someone's imagination.
Can't do anything.
Wanna do something.
Growing up
in this screwed up world
I've seen and heard
messed up stuff.
My mind's screwed-up.
I can't think.
I can't eat.
The demons in my head
are trying to kill me
in my sleep.

-Big V

From The Beat: We understand your strong feelings about what happened to your mother. That's an ugly and terrible thing. But if you try to take matters into your own hands, you'll end up behind bars. Imagine how your mom would feel then. Rotten things do happen in life. But also, plenty of good things. You have to be prepared for the good things and accept them when they come your way. And by living a good life, the good things have a way of finding you. As for those demons in your head... if you aren't exaggerating about that, the healthiest thing to do would be to discuss this matter with a therapist. There are very caring people on staff at the hall. Ask them for help.

I Keep Looking

I keep looking at the clock
going tick tock,
waiting for the number eight.
I've gained weight in here.
The truth is I don't know
what's going to be on the eight.
Can't wait to go back to my city.
Everyday my bones keep shaking
back and forth, praying to the Lord,
in my room, in silence.
My heart is crying for my mom and God.
The law is strict for stealing at the mall.
The judge will see my name
and send me to a new placement.
I am going to have to face it.

-Fernando

From The Beat: It's easy to get superstitious about numbers, but wiser to focus on what's really important. We get the sense that you are beginning to understand where you really need to place your mental energy. And by the way, we like your poem. Good writing.

The System Wants Us To Live A White Person's Lifestyle

What's up with The Beat? This is yo' boy, G-Enano. This system wants us to change our ways to live a lifestyle we don't want to live. They tryna make us live a white person's lifestyle. This system is the biggest gangster of all. They want us locked up for tryna get money, but they get money off us—that's the shady shhh. They can't change us, we can only change ourselves, but don't wait 'til you get locked up to change. If you living a thug lifestyle and are willing to die for your block, do your thang. I'm gonna rep to the fullest for my cause and my family. I'm out.

To all doing time—stay up. Much respect from the one and only ...

-G-Enano

From The Beat: So only white people have the right to safety, freedom, and the chance to make their parents proud, or provide a good life to their children? Only white people have the right to sleep the whole night through without gunfire? What are you saying? How will it help your cause and your family if you're incarcerated or dead?

Patience

What's up with The Beat? This ya boy, Moreno, sittin' at the Ranch. Another day, another hour, sitting and waiting for my day to come. T

he only thing there could be for me to get through this is patience, to get back to the fams and the homies. The only thing keeping me getting on from this program is my lil' sis. She's seven and she's only seen me once this year. She's the only thing that motivates me to complete this program, so I could once again be free.

-Moreno

From The Beat: If you've learned patience down at the Ranch, that's a lesson that can endure and keep you alive and prosperous for a lifetime. Losing a year of your sister's life must be really hard for her and for you. Does she understand that someday you'll be back in her life again?

Response

What's good with The Beat? You know me, Yung Chink, chillin' like a villain, tryna make a million, but you know I can't make that happen, being locked up, so my plans are being delayed. Well, all I'm doing is responding to your comment in last week's paper.

Me, I'm as real as it gets—da raw and un-cut version, ya dig? No fake in my blood, all real, and ninjas that know me, know I handles business. Well-educated, book smart and street smart. I got the best of both worlds. Always been a leader and always will be. Stay in front, call me the porch, babe. Lead, never follow. I'm that type that's built to last (win.) Independent, too. Don't depend on nobody. I gets my problems solved. I supply me and my family, it's just been on hold fo' a nice period of time. I work fo' mine, if it's legit or hustlin'. I gets my issue, believe that. I don't wait on nobody, I do what it do, ya dig? I'ma point guard in this so-called game. I'm that valuable player. I does it all. When I hit them streets, I'ma be in the door, babe. You either respect it or get disrespected, believe that. Money is my motivation.

Well, Beat, that's about it. That should sum it all up. A "real" ninja is definitely what I am. Remain real.

-Chinky

From The Beat: You've got the street rhetoric (talk) down, but what does it really mean? It sounds like at least part of whatever it is you do in the streets is illegal, but that you plan to get over with it. We can see the high IQ at work in this piece, but what's the use if you just apply your brains to petty street livin'? That's not a hustle, that's a sure-fire way to get hustled.

Arkansas Hard Time

Chea mayne, what it is with The Beat, dawg? This ya boy E-Boy with a lil' message fo y'all. The hills have eyes, ya dig. I am home so bring the patron and tell 'em it's on.

But on the trill dawg, a ninja just touch back down from the Ark. state doin' hard time where you lil' dawgs ain't never been before, ya dig.

Get to the pen and freeze up, but young ninja like me stay up, so don't get in too much.

I am finna cut this short 'cause of this phony condition, dawg. But I hope The Beat put this in until I can really put some knowledge on my dunnies.

-E-Boy

From The Beat: Well, we're waiting for you to spit some real knowledge because there isn't a whole lot here. Maybe next time... You can tell us all about Arkansas, the home state of Bill Clinton.

I'm Missing A Year Of My Family's Life

What's up with The Beat? This is ya boy, Moreno, at the Ranch, chillin' with Pauline, doing my time to get out, you feel me?

Another day, another dollar, and when I get out, ladies gone holla at the ninja on the block, but this ninja gotta do his time before any of this pop off. They holdin' me down from the fam and the homies. Fam at my house—my lil' bra and lil' sis, growing up for a year, but you feel me? One day I'll be free and back to the fam and the homies.

-Moreno

From The Beat: What is it doing to you to miss a whole year of your family's life? Do your brother and sister know where you are? What kind of example will you be offering them, once you're free again? Do you care how what you do influences them?

Hate Can't Be Stopped

What good with The Beat? This be boy Moreno sittin' at the Ranch, taking this bullshhh every day, but I ain't trippin. One day it's gone be a release date.

But today I'm about to write about one of the topics. I say that we at our age have a harder life, we got different lifestyles than our parents. Us at our age—we go through more struggles, including crimes, guns and murder, but things ain't gone change—it's just a revolving circle. The government ain't gone stop the violence, it's just gonna increase. They stop for a certain amount of time, but soon gone be free roaming on them streets, getting money hungry. But I'm gonna leave it right here. Hate can't be stopped.

-Moreno

From The Beat: If you're right, that the streets are going to get meaner, what does that mean for you when you get out? Have you created another life beyond the streets ready to go, when you get out?

Back To Thugging

Man, Beat, this whole time I've been at the Ranch, it's been a whole front, 'cause they be tryna play ninja fo' weak ass shhh, but I learned how to play the game to where I don't get played. But, anyways, them streets is gettin' ugly and I love it. Man, the police think they got shhh on lock. Man, they can keep thinking that shhh, 'cause ninjas is still gettin' smacked. Much love to the homies and homegirls.

-G-Menace

From The Beat: How do you feel about people getting "smacked," or killed, as you write? Why do you love that the streets are getting ugly? And how can you say you're not getting played, if you're writing to The Beat from a system facility?

Ain't Feelin' It

What's up with it?

This that young ninja Gutta coming to ya. But man shhh around here is getting mainy. I'm trying to get outta here and go to this spot in Fresno for a quick minute. Like I said a quick minute.

I don't know, I ain't been feeling this shhh 'cause I could've got released hella long ago, to keep it real. But everyone know how they be up in here. They be on that other shhh and be trying to figure out how to keep you, so I ain't even tripping.

Forget 'em. They just a whole bunch of jerks that want to see another ninja locked up. I know they can't hold me down, so like I said before, forget 'em. I ain't even real in these streets a lot of people where I come from snitch.

-Dexter

From The Beat: Even if everything you say about this place is true, don't you also have some responsibility for being here? In other words, they couldn't keep you if you didn't give them the power to begin with. We hope you get to that spot in Fresno if it's a place to be safe. But there's dirt everywhere. If that's what you're looking for, you'll find it. We just hope that's not what you're looking for.

Get It Together

I'm smart and clean you need uh girl like me
I'm fine like wine, yes I am a dime
I stay fitted 'cause best believe I'm in it to win it
Ya click is unorganized. Get it together
Ya homies keep dyin'. Ya won't last forever
I promise you I been stop lying so stop trying
'Cause you can't compete with a real G like me
We stay in the street but right now obviously not
'Cause you see me in The Beat

-Kirstin

From The Beat: This is more a personal letter to someone than a Beat piece. If "real G's" like you have to spend time taking orders from strangers in lock-up, is it worth it?

Make This The Last

Basically, the way I'm feeling now... All I can say to the next person that is about to fill my cell is to make this the last time to enter this room. Being locked up behind these four walls isn't a good thing.

-Sharmila

From The Beat: There isn't much useful advice in this, Sharmila. We're sure you're telling yourself that this is the last time you'll be here, but is it? What will you change to make that promise a reality? Wishing is not enough; there has to be some kind of changed behavior to go along with the promise.

The Next Person To Occupy My Cell

I would tell her that you shouldn't be walking in and out of jail because she needs to be in school and getting ready to everyday life. But if she does come up here, to expect some crazy as counselors, nasty food, other people's clothes, and staying in your room mostly all day.

So, to make her time smoother, I would tell her to stay to herself, not argue with the counselors, try to stay calm and don't get into it with the other girls. I would tell them to stay as far away from trouble as possible because coming to jail is not worth it. And you really don't want to come to jail because the counselors are making fat money off of us.

-KNHWJ

From The Beat: Are you following your own advice? Do you stay out of the drama when you're here? Of course, the best advice is not to come here at all, so what do you plan to change on the outs to make sure this is your last visit to this place?

Wanting To Rewind Time

What's crackin'-lackin'-booty-smackin'. This yo' boy Sobolo, and I'm just sayin' wha's up with The Beat Within?

I'm still up in this bullshhhing-ass system, and I'm really getting tired of these staffs giving me time and DRB's and shhh. I'm tired of getting three meals a day, too. If I was on the outs right now I would be smoking blunts after blunts. and when I get the munchies I would eat every kinda candies, chips, and sodas I could get.

I know the homies that are in here want the same thing I want right now and they wish that they could rewind back time and fix what they did wrong. A lot of people in here want the same thing too. For all in this system, I'ma tell ya once and I'ma tell ya twice... yo' heads up and do your time.

-Sobolo

From The Beat: We had to change your title since no one could tell us what it meant... There are times in all our lives when we'd like to rewind time and do things over, but that's impossible. Time only moves in one direction. So that is the direction you should focus on — the future. Besides smoking blunts and satisfying the munchies, what else do you see in your future — especially the things that will not lead you back to what you say you're so tired of?

Why Play

Messing with the streets is like messing with fire. It ain't gonna cool off, it just gonna get hotta and hotta, and you wont realize it until you get burnt. And like I say, the streets ain't nothing but a game that you can't beat. So why play it!.

-Jessie

From The Beat: We agree with you, Jessie. So, now that you know that the only way to "win" the game is not to play at all, what changes do you see in your life when you touch down?

My Life Is Harder Than My Parents'

I think that my life is harder than my mother's life. I feel this way because she hasn't been to jail, but I have. She does not know what it feels like to get your freedom taken away. Things are not going to remain the same because I feel that I am going to be up in juvenile forever. I feel that I am going to be coming in and out of jail for the rest of my life. I hate being up in here. I fear I am going to go crazy in this facility. If they don't let me out, that's what is going to happen.

-KNHWJ

From The Beat: You're going to have to explain how you can be in a place that you fear is making you go crazy while, at the same time, telling us that you'll be coming back! If you hate it as much as you say, why wouldn't you do everything in your power to flip the script and never come back?

Do Life Change Or People Feeling

Day after day, I hear people say, "My ninja ain't the same no more. They actin' funny. They getting greedy because it ain't no money out here."

Is that the real reason? No, because ninja change like seasons. You don't know what's coming. Everybody out here take life for what it is. They get it how it came. That why it's no change because ninja ain't working for shhh. They take credit for something that they ain't done. That why it ain't no change.

-T B

From The Beat: What about personal change? Is that possible? Can individuals change? If the answer is yes, how does that change come about? What about you? Have you changed? How? What changes would you like to see happen, in the 'hood and in yourself?

I Once Called You Homie

Back in the day pero not to long ago
I looked beyond your eyes and within your soul
No reflection showed, chale where'd my homie go?
Your eyes may make blind of the average eye
Pero they didn't fool the eyes of mine
We both call the same barrio home
Pero it's well known in those calles
Your presence is never shown
You talk with a gangster's tone
Pero your actions don't match
Those words your tongue throws
I stand alone while you spooked vatos stand alone
And you jealous foo's wonder
How this jaina took your throne
You hate me porque I beat you at your own game
And now your reputation will never be the same
Come on homie, wha's up dog
There's not to much goin' on pero too much goin' wrong
Now I'ma do what I gotta do
And you can do what you gotta do
I once called you homie
But now that chapter is through

-Grumpy

From The Beat: With the writing skills you have, we wish you wouldn't spend time telling us about some other vato and why you're better than him. We'd much rather read your assessment and analysis of yourself — how you got where you are and how you plan to get where you're going.

Stay Out Of Jail

My parents' life is easy. They been together a long time. Me and my girlfriend haven't been together a month or so. That's how I think their life is better than mine. I'm going to stay out of jail and stop doing stupid things.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We hope you can keep the promise you make at the end of this piece. Stop doing stupid things and stay out of jail!z

'Cause We Beefin'

I'm back with another piece 'cause me and the wife going through it. But I can't even be mad 'cause I know she doing that shhh 'cause I'm locked up. But she on that other shhh, like really getting mad for little shhh.

She told me she gotta talk to me, but she wanna wait till I get out, and I don't think I'm getting out no time soon. But I know when I get out the beef gone get squashed. But she don't like the fact that I'm locked up and I just got off probation. But I'm out.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: So, do you think she's wrong to be angry with you for getting locked up just after you got off probation? Do you think she is feeling that she is not the most important thing in your life since you risked being taken from her by doing what it was you did. You took the risk and you lost. How should she react?

A Messed Up Economy

The world changed because new technology and more people goin' to jail. But the wages goin' up. Schools are getting closed down. The economy is messed up because the country is in debt because they owe about a billion dollars.

-J.O.

From The Beat: We don't know if you can do anything about the messed up economy, but what are you doing about the mess you can control — the one that takes you away from home and puts you here?

How Has The World Changed?

What's poppin'? This yo' boy Ju B. I askin' myself how has the world changed. The world changed a lot these last couple of years. I remember when it used to be coo' to trust everybody. Now these days ninjas a snake you with a quickness.

Ninjas ain't real like they used to be. Nowadays, these fake ninjas would believe another ninja before they believe you. Don't matter what y'all a been through, but nowadays ninjas getting snitched on by they own friends. But he would always be talking 'bout he would love you to the end. That's why I say watch who you call your homies or your friends.

-Ju B

From The Beat: It is very sad to read that you can't trust anyone. That's a very hard way to live. Why do you think these changes have happened? If things were better before, can they become better again? How?

Easy Life

Man, is my life easier or harder? Man, I'ma tell you like this, dog, my life ain't hard. All I got to do is stay with it and don't slip, be smart and watch the people around me and the people away from me, you dig.

But on the real boy boy, my life is easier than harder because all I do is stay in the 'jets with the goons, get money, watch my surroundings, and lay back and stack you feel me. But only time when my life get difficult — not hard but difficult — is when these fake lil' ninjas try and act like they really 'bout what they be talking when they not.

-Young Ice

From The Beat: Forgetting the last line (which we took out as threatening), didn't you leave something important out of your description? Like, what are you doing here? If you just "lay back and stack," then what are you stacking now? And who are you stacking it for? You've only given us a piece of the "easy life" you live. There are consequences, which you ignore at your own peril.

You Can't Shine Like Me

You can't shine like me
Drive a ride like me
Pull a dime like me
'Cause you ain't from the streets
I'ma 'hood star you know how I live
I handle big Ice, you can't live how
I live

See me, I'm so fly
And I'm different from these otha suckas
Only seventeen and I don't live home with motha
Yeah, I keep it real
Don't believe you can ask my brother Cec
Dudes poppin' grills and
They think they getting' tougher
I see dudes trying to act like me, be like me
Even dress like me, No!
You not me and there won't be another
Kick that, let e get to the jewels and the charms
So many gems on my hand
Got me feelin' like a hustla
Got a wizard on my hands
Sorta like Caram Butler

-Davey-D

From The Beat: We compare yourself to others? If they're free and you're locked up, who cares how many jewels and charms you have? If your hustle leads you to this little jail (and then, the ones that come after), it's time to find a new hustle!

On The Road To Riches

Man, the world changed in many ways very quick. People don't care about other people. They don't care if they have a ninja sitting down for a long lil' minute over some shhh they really don't know.

The world changed not just in that way, but ninjas inside this screwed-up-ass world. Ninjas be softer than Charmin, fo' real. That's why I only mess with a chosin' few.

And fo' all you ninjas that's in love, a female ain't go do nothing but scream and fake cry, and make the next ninja when you die. And that's why I'm on the road to riches, bustin' it spendin' six digits, tryna reach a real mil ticket.

-Lil' Snub

From The Beat: It's interesting that your road to riches includes stops along the way (like now) that only manage to put riches into the pockets of all who are keeping you locked-down — except for you. It's not a very promising recommendation for someone betting on your future. Why don't you find a way to stay out of here before you focus on how others are living.

Attitudes Are Getting Worse

A lot of things have changed like faces. People getting killed like every day, you feel me. Young people attitudes are getting worse every generation.

Everybody going around with a "forget it" attitude. More guns on the streets. More people using them. People trying to make a name for theirself, be something they're not, you feel me. That's what's happening.

-Melthon

From The Beat: Is your attitude getting worse every day? Why or why not? How are you preparing for a better future?

Gettin' Stuff Off My Chest

Ahy ooh! What's good wit' it Beat? It's yo' boy lil' G once again? Anyways, what's good though?

The topics this week are coo', but I kind of got some shhh I'm trying to get off my chest, and the best way for me to do that is to write on paper.

Life's hard. I know you all heard the expression, "Life's a you-know-what and then you die." People be hatin', and it really be getting to a ninja. I mean, I try not to let it get me, but shhh, it do!

Damn! I gotta go. Some shhh goin' down right now, this lil' condition. A'ight, never mind. It coo' now. These ninjas up in here trippin'.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: Well, you didn't really have the time to get whatever it was off your chest because of that little condition that erupted. So, now that things are back to normal, do you want to try to remember what it was you wanted to talk about?

Parents Life Way Harder

I hear a lot of young dudes complaining about they life is hard… You ain't got no idea about what those before you had to go through. My mama went through so much and she still had me. So for that I love her to death, as well as my pops. He done been through so much since 2004. And I hate that I have not been there for my fam. But the OGs had it way rougher.

-Lil' Skippa

From The Beat: You're right, Lil' Skippa, that's it's hard for every generation to know what the generation before went through. Each generation tries to make life for their children easier. Sometimes they succeed, and sometimes they don't. This is a very nice tribute to your parents for all they've done for you. We hope you show it to them.

Nothing I Can Do

Man, my life gets harder and harder every day. One day me and the squad getting busted at, and the next day we bustin' back. Then, next thing you know, the rollers jackin' all the homies up. And it gets harder and harder when the homies get locked up or they die 'cause you can't do nothing about it. But I'm gone make it. All the homies is.

-Yung Pooda

From The Beat: The truth is, there is something you can do about it, and that's to see the world in a different light — not "us" versus "them" but all of us in the same leaky boat, needing all the help we can get. And one more truth — a tragic one that's proven every day — which is that not all the homies will make it. Some will. Others will end up serving long prison sentences, never seeing a female. And others, sad to say, will see only worms. Now's the time to make the changes that will keep that from happening.

Who's Next

It's unfortunate that a young brother will walk into my cell right after I get out this thang May 11th. But I'ma drop a few words of knowledge to the next victim of this bullshh-ass juvenile system.

When you get in here. you gone have a bunch of ninjas on yo' madoola to test yo' heart. You got two choices: ignore it and be portrayed as a sucka. or you could handle yo' business Leroy. It's gone get you a 24-hour stay in yo' cell, but dudes gone know wha's up.

But if you want to zip through this time, do what you told and you will hit that step 4 real quick. Then you will be out yo' room most of the time with crew and all the shhh. So do the time and don't let it do you.

-Lil' Skippa

From The Beat: If you had received advice like this before you walked into that cell, would it have made a difference to how you handled yourself? Are these the only two choices you can see for when you get challenged by other boys? Since we're not in your shoes, we don't know what we would do in your situation.

The Next Person In My Cell

I would tell him or her that it ain't cool because you got to wear other people's drawe's or panties, and you eat hella nasty-ass food. And you never really get to be on the phone. That last seven minutes. That's it, and you be mad.

-Lil' Cali

From The Beat: So, knowing that it's not cool to be here, what changes are you going to bring to your life when you touch down so that this is the last time you experience this?

To The Homies

I'ma tell y'all, man, revenge is sweet but not great. The 'hood ain't no joke. People getting married to the game deeper and deeper every day. Walking down the 'hood is playing your life in a soldier way. 'Cause one hit, it would, put chu into a deep sleep. But the back streets would have you do the Gangsta Zean.

So, sick how my peoples grow, their lives, goin' through abuses, excuses, being strong individuals.

For the homies with the heavy case, stay up homie. You know we don't trip about the time we spend. All eyes on us like a damn dime.

-Shadow L

From The Beat: We had to take the end of this piece out as totally inappropriate for The Beat. What makes us sad when we read a piece like this is that you don't trip about the time you're giving away to a system that keeps you in a cage. When you do start tripping about time (which is something that can never be retrieved), maybe then you'll find the courage to change, and not come to places like this.

The Real Life

This shhh gettin' old
And it's getting too real
Every time I'm on the streets
I got the urge to kill
But I got a family
So that keep me motivated
All these ninjas out here
Are some shady haters
But I like the females
And I like the cars
And everyday I live
I live life like a star
But I still go to school
Still do the doo
Still get high and do what I do
And the police really be getting on my nerves
Every time they see me they think I'm scared
Still on the block
Still got that shock
Still serving knocks
And the shhh's getting hot
But when I'm in the bed
The shhh get in my head
And I think to myself
'I'm fittin to go to the feds!"

-Tray

From The Beat: Tight little poem about your life on the streets, but it leaves out one critical part of it — and that's the price you pay for living life "like a star." Getting shut away in a place like this may be nothing to you, but the more it happens, the more it becomes something. We're glad you're still in school, and hope you keep going. That's your real hope to shine.

Hmmm!

What's good with The Beat, mayne? Ya know ya boy just chillin'. Masta villain up in this joint waitin' to get onto a grouper. But yeah, I'ma put it to y'all like this... on what I've been thinking, stressing 'bout.

Thinkin' bout my family.

Stressin' that I hurt them deeply.

Thinkin' on what I did was wrong.

Make a long Beat short 'cause of the condition in the unit, think before you act ! And when you do what you do, don't cry! But a young uce like me stay strong.

-Ulala

From The Beat: How do you stay strong? If you're thinking that what you did to get here was wrong, are you also thinking about not doing that kind of thing once you get out of here? We hope so because if you repeat the mistakes of the past, you know you can look forward to the same consequences as the past.

Going Home

What's good, Beat? Me, chillin', doin' time. I turned eighteen in this hole, and went to court and all the stuff. They told me that I'm goin' to have to do 180 days in here, then I get to go home. When they told me that, I was happy as hell, feel me.

Forget the Ranch. They was trying to put me back there, and I was like, "Hell naw." I thought for a minute that I was going to 850. but they didn't want me there.

So anyways, when I get out, I'm going to do better, get my GED, get a job and stay out of trouble and the system, feel m. I'm out.

-E.B.

From The Beat: We hope you aren't waiting to get your GED until you get out. You should be working on that right now so that when you get out, you can hit the ground running — to college, to a job, to freedom

Active

What's good with The Beat? You know me, posted like a mailbox, doin' me, as the usual. Well, today I am going to acknowledge y'all on how to do time.

To some people, doin' time can be very stressful. Me, I'm not sayin' I don't stress, 'cause I do, but the majority of time I keep my head focused and mind working. The main key of doin' time is to is to stay "active." Doin' time, you can't just sit down, chill, and be pensive. You have to keep busy, do things you don't normally do. Walk around, play sports, write raps, or talk to your peers. When you stay active, your mind will stop thinking about the "outs." Your mind will stay on the things you are doin'. So when you do time, you have to stay active, that's the main key.

Well, that's all, Beat. I'm gonna stay real and keep it solid. See y'all next week. One...

-Chinky

From The Beat: You're pretty wise. No wonder you're staying chill down at the Ranch. Is there any way you can take the positive things you learn from captivity and apply them to your life on the outs so you won't get in so much trouble?

What It Is

What's good with The Beat? It's just ya boy, The Dude, posted at the Ranch. But I'm just lettin' it pour, 'cause I ain't feelin' it. But then, when I bounce up out this camp, I'm 'bout to do what it do! And if you in the way... well, when you get in the way, I'm go show you what it is. But I want all the fans and groupies to know that it's never nothin,' it's always something! So just get ready fo' The Dude! And if you ain't' ready, you will get left!

I noticed that nobody expect a real solid ninja to know shhh. People be comin' at me like "We didn't know you understood the economic system," or "We didn't know you had an opinion on Obama." Man, forget y'all. I'm a thug and I know more than most teachers. But this white America ain't ready fa' me! But I just do me and any suckas tryna perpetrate just gotta get it! I look at it like this—if you snitchin' or you hangin' with snitches, then you is a snitch! I'm out.

-The Dude

From The Beat: We here at The Beat just hope you expand your already curious mind to include the rest of the world beyond the streets enough to lure you to explore the whole world. See what Nigeria, Paris, New Guinea offer you!

Hopeless

What's good with The Beat? It's just ya boy, The Dude, posted at the Ranch, ready to hit these streets ASAP. I'm just 'bout to let it run, but though I don't see hope in helpin' the hopeless, if they just want less. I don't expect nobody, no, I don't want nobody to help me if I ain't doin' shhh for myself. And why would you expect anybody to help you out? That's a question only those who use others can answer. But those who can't do for theyselves is children or mentally and physically handicapped people, or very old people. So which one is y'all?

Me, I'm just doin' me and that ain't never been bein' hopeless! I don't try, I just do. I don't be dreamin' 'bout all the riches, I be dreamin' 'bout gettin' shot and dyin'. This shhh is real and it ain't go' stop when I'm gone! But it is what it is while I'm here! But I'm out, 'til next time.

-The Dude

From The Beat: Why do you blame people who feel hopeless for feeling that way? And it's all right to help them any way you can, too, nobody would think you were weak. Plus it sounds like you have some feelings of hopelessness in your own dreams. If so, maybe you should help yourself save your life and stay in school, at work, home, somewhere off the streets.

Waiting To Disperse!

It's ya boy, Lil' Rob, still holdin' it down at this garbage ass Ranch. Well, I did ten weeks and got 40 weeks to go, so 40 weeks 'til I disperse! Until I touch down! I wish they had more programs for us down here—like archery (bow and arrow), driver's ed—so we could leave, ha ha, computer tech—that's money right here. They don't do squat up here with their computers—they're getting dusty. Boxing—I can fight, but I want to learn to fight better. They should have multicultural classes and history.

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: You have many good ideas for programs the Ranch could develop for all of you. Why don't you ask Tim Diestel or Mr. Hauk to have a meeting for the residents and the staff, where you all could throw out ideas for programs you residents feel could really benefit you when you're released. They've had these meetings in the past, but some residents felt that the staff didn't really pay attention to their ideas. Can all of you get your requests together and let the staff know what classes you all need? The staff is searching for solutions, to help you guys keep yourselves free on the outs.

I Hate Being Away

It's ya boy, Lil' Rob over here at the weak Ranch, just chillin' and shhh. But, I wanna let y'all know that I hate being away from the fams. My niece said, "Where you at, Unc'?" I was talking to her from the halls on Christmas Day and I had to lie to her and say I was on vacation from work and I can't make it today at the party! Well, Beat, I hate being away from the fam!

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: It does make being away from your family more real when you have to confront your niece and even lie to her, so you won't break her heart, doesn't it? So what's the lesson? What does being there for your niece, your fam and your own freedom really mean to you?

The World Is Still The Same

Man, to me the world hasn't changed one bit. Everything is still the same—just a new year. I'm still the same—I just got a lil' sharper, baby. Man, I'm solid to the bone. I mean, that's how we have to be when we on the front line. That's why I always say if you a real time gangbanger that would be yo' model that you live by, 'cause that's mines, homie. I'm up. Much love.

-Menace

From The Beat:? What if someday your crew fails or refuses to back you up? What if you get wounded and can't take care of yourself? What world are you creating to back yourself up, in case you can't or don't want to hang in the streets any more?

Don't Know What They're Going To Do

Why me? This time I was doing the right thing but just got caught up in the stuff I wasn't supposed to be in. I got sent to 850 for a case that I didn't do and had no information about. All because I went to save my friend from getting beat up. Then from 850 I got sent to San Bruno Country Jail and I just got out on March 24.

I did three weeks there over something I didn't do. So I get out and can't go back to the Walden House where the courts put me there. So I was just out for like eleven days. Then they put out a warrant for me and caught me on April 3rd.

I been doing good for the past six months, and I don't know what they are going to do with me, I'm already eighteen and a half, so I just gotta wait now.

-Wiggims

From The Beat: You say you were doing good, but that you got caught up in some stuff you weren't "supposed to be in." Does that mean you were doing good in general, but did something specific that got you here? Or, are you saying the system got it completely wrong this time? It's sad how our past can sometimes catch up to us, even when we're walking on a new path. All we can say is don't let this little setback bring you down. Wherever they tell you to go, and whatever they tell you to do, just get it behind you and move on.

VOICES IN SPANISH

Quiero Lo Mejor

Yo vine a este pais a superarme. Sé que he andado en cosas malas, pero yo quiero lebantarme la cabeza. Estar aqui, que lo estén insultando, no me gusta.

Por eso yo quiero lo mejor para todos. Tengo fe en Dios que me va a sacar de esta cárcel. Cuando me saquen de acá, voy a buscar lo mejor para mí y ojalá Dios me oiga.

Gracias por venir a distrarme un poco.

From The Beat: En este lugar no vas a encontrar lo mejor. Lo mejor esta afuera, estudiando, con un buen trabajo y con una vida de buena moral. Quieres lo major, empieza a buscarlo. ¿Cuales son los planes?

I Want The Best

I came to this country to succeed. I know I've been in bad things, but I want to keep my head up. Being here, getting insulted is something I don't like.

That's why I want the best for all. I have faith that God will get me out of here. When they release me, I'm going to look for the best and I hope god listen to me.

Thanks for entertaining me.

-Denis, San Francisco

From The Beat: This place you will never find the best. That best is out there, with a good education, job and a life with good moral. If you want the best, start searching for it. What are your plans?

Mi Vida Y La De Mi Madre

Que onda Bien! Hablando sobre mi vida y la de mi madre, yo pienso que la vida de mi madre ha sido bien dificil porque ella siempre nos ha criado sola a mí y a mis hermanos. Nuestro padre no nos han querido ayudar y entonces mi madre ha tenido que trabajar y dejarnos con mi abuela.

La vida ha sido dura. Nos ha mantenido sola porque no ha tenido mucha ayuda.

From The Beat: Deberías de hacer algo por esa persona quien ha sido tu madre y padre a la misma vez. No vale la pena que le pagues de esta misma manera. Ella se merece algo mejor.

My Life And My Mother's

What's up! Talking about my life and my mother's, I think her life has been very hard because she had to raise my brothers and I by herself. Our dad didn't want to help and my mother had to work and leave us with my grandmother.

Life has been hard. She has supported us by herself because she didn't have any other support.

-Luis San Francisco

From The Beat: You should do something for that person who has been your mother and father at the same time. She doesn't deserve this from you. She deserve better.

Mi Primera Vez

Buenos, amigos yo les voy a contar que esta es mi primera vez que estoy en la cárcel. Pero por mala suerte, me van a mandar a Honduras.

Bueno, yo les quiero decir que si Dios les da la oportunidad de salir de aqui, que la aprovechen. Si pueden trabajen y no anden haciendo cosas malas.Piensen en sus familias. Ellas sufren por ustedes. Piensen en el día de mañana, en sus hijos. Les gustaría que sus hijos anduvieran haciendo las cosas que ustedes hacen. ¿Verdad que no?

Yo sé que aqui en Estados Unidos, la vida es dura para nosotros los Hondureños. Si Dios les dio la oportunidad de llegar aqui, aprovechenla y traten de salirse de las cosas malas. Estudien y trabajen.

Bueno, es todo amigos y que Dios los bendiga a ustedes y familias. Cuidensen y no se aguiten que algún día vamos a salir de aqui.

From The Beat: Por lo menos, aprendistes mucho de esta experiencia. Nos gusto mucho como nos aconsejastes con este pedazo. Esperamos que más que uno agarren tu mensaje. Tambien esperamos que estas palabras no solo sean palabras y que tomas ventajas de tu propio ejemplo. ¿Dinos y tú que tienes planeado para tu futuro? Sigue pensando de esta manera. Vas en el buen camino.

My First Time

Well, I'm going to share that this is my first time in jail. Unlucky, they are going to send me to Honduras.

Well, I want to tell you that if God give you a chance to get out of here, take advantage of it. If you could work, do it and stop doing bad things. Think about your family. They suffer because of you. Think about the day of tomorrow, in your kids. Would you like your kids to do the things you are doing. Do you?

I know life is the US is hard for us, Hondurans. If God gave you the chance to come here, take advantage of it and try to get away from bad things. Study and work hard.

Well, this is all my friends. May God bless you and your families. Don't get sad because some day you will get out.

-Muñequito San Francisco

From The Beat: At least, you are learning from your experiences. We like the way you advice with this piece. We hope that more than one of you get your message. We also hope that these words don't just get dumped, and that you also take advantage of your own advice. Tell us what are your plans for the future? Keep thinking like this. You are the right track.

Lo Que Ha Sido Mi Vida

Mi vida ha sido muy dificil pero a la misma vez ha sido buena porque tengo a mi familia bien. Me quieren mucho, pero cuando me vine de mi pais, fue muy dificil. Tuve que arriesgarme y sufri mucho. Cuando cruce pase por mucho peligro, mi familia sufrió mucho mas que mí. Me duele no estar cerca de mi familia.

From The Beat: Ahora ellos deben de estar sufriendo por tu situación corriente. Cuando logres algo con mucho efuerzo, procura de siempre mantenerlo.

What My Life Has Been

My life has been very hard, but at the same time, it has been a good one because I have my family. They love me so much and when I left the country it was hard. I had to risk it and I suffered a lot. When I was coming, I went through a lot of danger. My family suffered more than me. It hurts me not to be near my family.

-Juan San Francisco

From The Beat: They should be suffering more because of your current situation. Always keep in mind that when you gain something with a lot of effort, try to always keep it.

En El Camino

Cuando sali de Honduras, tube que cruzar varias fronteras. Primero cruce la frontera de Honduras con Guatemala, despues cruce la frontera de Guatemala con México.

Estubimos sufriendo mucho montados en el tren, y pidiendo comida a varias personas. En México, encontramos personas muy buenas que nos ayudaron.

From The Beat: Parece que no sirvio mucho el efuerzo que hicistes. Para la proxima, deberías de tomar en serio las cosas que debes tomar en serio.

In The Road

When left Honduras, I had to cross a few borders. First, I crossed the one with Honduras with Guatemala, and then the Guatemala and Mexico border.

We were suffering in the train, and begging people for food. In Mexico, we met good people that helped us.

-Bairon San Francisco

From The Beat: But it seems like a lot of effort was made for nothing. For the next time, you should take advantage of the things you work hard for.

Lo Que No Quiero Para Nadie

Hola me llamo Edgar. Cuando deje mi celda y me vaya a CYA, o si Dios me da la oportunidad de ir a un programa, lo que creo que no va a pasar, quiero que ese cuarto se quede solo, inavitado para siempre. Yo no le deseo a nadie que venga y duerma en un cuarto frío, solos, y lejos de sus familiares.

Como quisiera que nunca otra persona se equivoque como yo y no llegara a ocupar el cuarto, porque lo que hay aqui nada es tuyo, ni el cuarto, ni los calcetines, ni la ropa que te vistes. Lo más importante es la libertad. Como yo les digo que lo único que no me quitan es la esperanza y la fe.

Para todos los que estan aqui, les digo que lo que no me pueden quitar es la fe. Yo también he visto a tantas gentes que entran y salen y regresan hasta más de cinco al mes.

Yo digo que si vinieran por lo que yo cahí aqui, nunca lo volviera hacer otra vez. Yo le ruego a Dios que me perdones mis pecados y me reduzca mi condena. Cuidensen y hasta pronto.

From The Beat: A nadie le gusta dormir o vivir en lugares donde tú vives. Lo bueno es que te has dado cuenta de lo más importante lo cual es mantener la libertad contigo y de los errors que estas cometiendo. Ahora la pregunta es, como la concervaras una vez que salgas de este lugar. ¿Tienes algunos pensamiento en como hacer esto?

What I Don't Want For Anyone

Hi, my name is Edgar. When I leave, when they send me to CYA, or if God give me the chance to go to a program, which I think won't happen, I want this room to stay alone forever. I don't wish this to anyone, to sleep in a cold room, alone, and far away from their family.

How much I wish that others didn't make the same mistakes I made, and end up in this room. What's here is not yours, not the room, socks, neither the clothes you wear. Freedom is what's more important. The only thing they can't take away is my hopes and faith. I have also seen a lot of people come in and leave and they came back five times or more.

I think that if they come here for the things I did, they would never come back. I beg to God so he can forgive my sins and to help me reduce my sentence. Take care and later.

-Lil' Snoopy San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't think that anyone would like to sleep or live in those places. The good think about this is that you've gotten to the point in realizing that freedom is what's important and you are using this time in reflecting on the mistakes you are making. The question is, would you keep your freedom once you get out of this place. Do you anything planned in doing this?

SHAWN MONTGOMERY

Real Men Have Feelings

It's my observation that the role of the black male has evolved in significant ways. We can no longer just bring home the bread as my grandfather and my father did. The responsibilities have changed tremendously. In some respect, our parents and grandparents may have had an easier role, perhaps because of lesser expectations during those turbulent times. Let me explain, Four generations ago, the primary need was for the man to be provider of his family. During that time, that was more than good enough. At that time, basically that was all that was required, and a man was worth his weight in gold if he was able to do that. That was a different time, and emotional nurturing by father figures was not high on the priority list. Thus, generations of men were taught to be strong resilient and fearless if they wanted to survive. There was no time (and in their minds, no benefit) to allowing people to see any emotion that could be considered a form of weakness.

I admire my forefathers for their strength and rawness, but, in some ways, those characteristics have had one negative effect on some men in the present-day world. The legacy of our forefathers has left a lot off us lost and stripped of one of the most essential tools that we need for our existence- and understanding of the power. The power of love and the importance of expressing it. Love, it's at the core of all we do. It's that quality that will make a weak man strong. Further, it's a brotherly love that fosters a bridge to communication.

I never had my grandfather explain to me what it was like to be a Black male in the 1930s. That must have been some real gangsta (stuff). What was that grind all about for a Brother? What was he feeling? What were his fears? How did he love his family? What did he tell his children? How did he love his wife? These are questions that I consider and try to answer with my family.

It's only when we understand our past that we can build on a better future. What are some of the missing pieces that would have made your dad a better man, thereby making you a better man? I want to know. I love people, and I stand tall as I represent each and every one of you. These are simple but complex questions, and I struggle with these questions as well. If you have no examples of love, how do you love? If you don't see your father express his love for his wife, how do you express it to your own? If you've never gotten the encouragement you need, how do you uplift your son, brother of friend?

Though, we still have the traditional expectations. Today, that's just the tip of the iceberg. Our emotional strength is required now. It's the understanding of our humanity that will make us better men. It will allow us to be better fathers, leaders and friends. It will give you the ability to just be real, and it will give you the courage to express that realness and that raises the question, Brothers, how do you deal with your feelings? It's ok to feel, my Bothers. This is where we grow. It's ok to love, grieve, laugh, cry, and rejoice because we have a chance to provide the missing link and to add a great piece to the pie. We take the best of the best and the best of the worst and make a new meal. A meal that is good for you, a meal that nurtures you as a man, thus allowing you to feed your soul. This creates a new cycle. This is where you grow individually, and now we can impact all of those we touch exponentially.

Consequently, we can teach our children that real men have feelings, emotions, fears, doubts and all the struggles that our ancestors had. We have a responsibility to ourselves to be better men, and the benefits far outweigh the work.

This is our generation. We are a new breed of men, who can love harder than our ancestors. We have the understanding that when we give love, it strengthens us. It never weakens. It will always come back to you. Let's talk fellowship, my Brothers. We have so much to learn from one another. Our families and communities need us in so many ways. We have the ball. What we do with it is up to us!

Our next writer is writing to us from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Fl. We'd like to welcome back Shawn this week in this issue. Shawn has been writing to us for a hot minute now and he always comes with the some real game. With pieces like "Real Men Have Feelings," and "What Do You Know About Yourself, " are some credible pieces that really gets to the roots of the problems. Shawn is saying that it's okay to express your feelings. If you don't express your feelings and emotions you're gonna keep them bottled up for a long time and then you might explode. Shawn also has piece on Black on Black crime and a piece dedicated to his love. Read up and take a dose of some of this medication for your mind, spirit and soul!

WHAT DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT YOURSELF?

The line between self-confidence and conceited is very thin. The line between arrogance and having self-esteem is also thin. But, how really well do you know yourself? Do you know your limitations? Are you being constantly judged by others who don't really know you? Do you spend a lot of time dispelling what others think of you? Some people go through life not caring about any of those things. They could care less about whether they're arrogant, conceited, or just plain vain. It's just not something they pay attention to.

Those same people, however, can't stand to be put under the spotlight of criticism when others are around. They refuse to admit they aren't perfect and that they don't know everything. We all go through life meeting people we admire. Some of them, we wish we could be alike, and others make us see a side of ourselves we're glad we can conceal, the fact is, none of us really know what we're capable of. We haven't been pushed to that extreme yet. We think we know what we will and won't do, but when a crisis arises, we see a side of ourselves that's scary. Parents never think their children are capable of committing violent acts, but when it does happen, parents don't know whether to protect them or turn them in to authorities.

The main focus of The Beat Within is one's personal ambitions and goals. When do you feel like quitting, and at one point do you feel you've had enough? Are you the type of person that gets disgusted with repeated failures? Do you just surrender to those failures and accept a life you know is beneath you? As some athletes discover, it sometimes takes a special person to reach down inside and pull out those inner demons. You get surprised at what you can accomplish once someone gets behind you and gives you that push. Don't give up. Don't ever give up. Challenge yourself everyday to excel above your own expectations. There's no reason any of us can't be high achievers. Once you get to know who you really are, you'll be surprised at what you can do, and how far you can go.

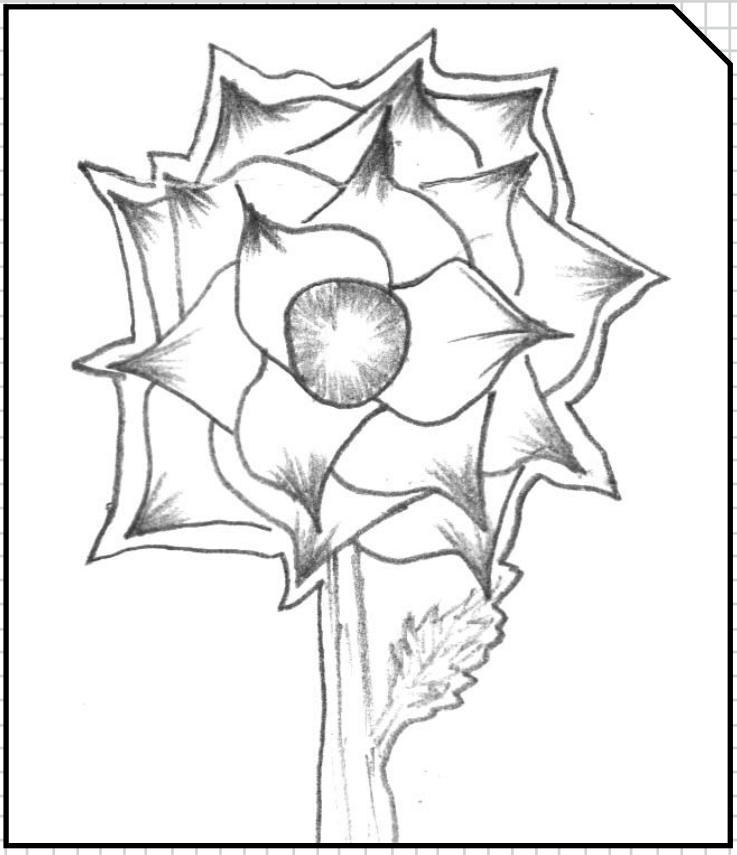
THERE IS LIFE AFTER YOUTH

Young people seem to think that they will always be in good health and will live forever. Aging, getting sick and dying never cross their minds. They seem to think that they can run the streets and stay up as long as they desire.

They believe that they can eat anything they want to, as much as they want anytime they want. They believe that they can drink as much alcohol as they want as often as they want. They think that they can smoke as much as they want. They think that unless they are deathly ill, there is no need to go to a doctor's office. They see no use for occasional doctor's check up.

When medication is prescribed, they see no need to take it. To so many young people, life is just one big party all the time. They don't realize how fleeting life really is. They wake up one morning in a state of shock. They have a hard time realizing how fast time has gone by. Slowly they began to realize that their party-all-the-time lifestyle is causing them problems as they begin to age. I want to promise all young people, that if you keep on living, you will get old, and you won't have any choice in the matter. They live for today and the damn tomorrow lifestyle will find you aging and suffering from high blood pressure, diabetes, heart problems, depression, aching joints, and a host of other illnesses.

You will find that you are being kept comfortable and in some cases alive by medication and constant doctor's care. A lot of this can be avoided by living your life in moderation. Believing me, there are a lot of senior citizens that say or think every day: I wish I had done or had not done that when I was young. Young people, avoid having to ever say or think this. Remember that you will age one day, but fear not, there is life after youth.



Glenda Is My Shepherd

When I am helpless and hurting inside
Glenda is my shepherd to guard and guide
When my hearts empty my wounded soul bleeds
I shall lack nothing Glenda meets my needs
When life seems confusing and out of control
She leads by the love that quiet my soul
When the road is too rough, and I'm tired of the game
She guides me in a path that will honor God's name
When fear chokes my vision and shortens my breath
She with me to walk through the shadow of death
Dejected, discouraged unable to laugh
I find comfort in her love
I'm weak and unworthy with nothing to bring
She prepares me a table I dine with a queen
I'm safe in her presence unhurt by my foes
For her love soothes my life and my cup overflows
Through pressure and problems, in stress and in strife
Her goodness and love fills the days of my life
Her watchful care will not weaken or cease
And forever I'll dine at her table in peace
Forever I'll dwell with my soulmate in peace.

BLACKS MURDERING BLACKS MUST STOP!

I recently read an article that declared that seven out of nine Blacks that get murdered are killed by another Black. I don't know whether those figures are right or not, but they are alarming and demand our attention. Blacks face so many threats of death and have no need to have Blacks killing Blacks. This fact is clearly indicated by the number of Blacks being killed in Florida. However, it is a glaring need for Americans to address that problem.

Why are Blacks so busy killing each other? That is a good question and a fair question. It points out that far too many Blacks no longer have respect for human life. Throw in false pride and big egos and you have some additional reasons why Blacks kill each other. Drugs running rampant is probably the #1 reason why Blacks are killing each other. Bad drug deals, drug dealers trying to protect their drug dealings and finally because of Blacks trying to steal money from drug dealers. Senseless fights are another reason so many Blacks are killed. There was a time when Blacks fought each other, somebody got a butt whipping, but everybody went home and lived happily ever after.

Today, somebody has to go to get a weapon and return to kill the person they had a fight with. The presence of so many guns on the streets and the fact that they are so easy for anybody to obtain is still another reason so many Blacks are killed by Blacks. Far too many people own guns. But it is not enough to just own a gun. Today, you have to shoot someone with your gun.

That is why total strangers drive-by and shoot another total stranger for no other reason than to brag that either shot or killed somebody. The shame of it all is that the rabble rousers and community activists remain strangely silent about Blacks killing Blacks or for that matter Black-on-Black crime. Blacks are silent and so are whites, governments and law enforcement officers. This killing has to stop. It is senseless and unnecessary. We are being killed by other Blacks. Blacks must raise their voices in demanding that Blacks murdering blacks diminishes to almost nothing.

MIKHAIL MARKHASEV:

Second Chances

Can the clean proceed from the unclean?
And love pour forth from a heart stone cold
Can light through the thickness of night be seen?
And God's image in man once again find its' mold?
Can grace be received by a miser's fist?
And spring be felt through the Winter's mist?
Can a man for a penny of pleasure be sold?
And a soul be redeemed without money or gold?
Can a life pour out be gathered once more?
And rebuilt like a castle on a seashore?
Can those pierced hands reach a lost sheep?
And sustain the one himself couldn't keep?
Yes, Christ can! And the one who defeated death
In the smoke of the world is my Eternal Breath.

Our next writer is a weekly contributor for The Beat Within. Coming from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca, Mikhail is an OG with deep pieces that will get you to think. Mikhail always writes his pieces reflecting on the mistakes he made in his life. He clearly says that the mistakes he made are irreversible, but it's not about trying to reverse the mistakes you made cause you can't let the past control your present, or your future. So peep out Mikhails pieces and embrace them with open ears.

Can a life pour out be gathered once more?
And rebuilt like a castle on a seashore?

Complicated

I wish things would be simple, and I'd know how to avoid the pitfalls in my path. But life is complicated, and I don't even know myself well enough to avoid unnecessary arguments and drama. Arguments can lead to other-things, and drama... Well, there is not a matter of changing it, but learning how to deal with IT: the unpredictable, the unprovoked, the unnecessary. The Christian Faith is a faith of second chances. I'm sorry for getting "religious" here, But if I'd share anything less than the truth (the way I understand it to be) then I'd be cheating the reader and lying to myself. Actually, every person alive is "religious" in the sense that he/she "believes in something", worships something (perhaps even himself), and lives according to certain standards (even if they're no standard at all).

Your faith is what defines you: it's what unites your thoughts and actions, what constitutes your life. But, back to second chances. Someone once asked a monk: "What is the Christian life like in the monastery?"

The monk answered, "We fall, and then we get up and try again. Then we again fall, and get up..." That's the gist off the Christian life, the path of our transformation, the boot camp of faith. Repentance is about moving forward. The actual word means "change of mind", a reconsideration of reality: our thoughts, words, choices that brought us to where we are. It's a well-traveled path, a sure path, and one that can be traveled anywhere, especially in prison.

Many of the mistakes I've made are IRREVERSABLE. I'm unable to resurrect the dead, or to undo the harm I've caused others. But, repentance isn't about changing the past, but transforming your future. It's about not allowing the past to control your present, or define who you are. It's about living in the real world, and not in an imaginary zone of "Only if..."

"If I call someone an idiot", then I'm forced to face the consequence of that action. It's going to be what it's going to be -- the person might strike out, might never forgive me, or might shrug it off -- who knows? But, whatever the outcome, I'm the one who has to decide whether or not I'm ever going to callsomeone else an idiot, or am I going to make sure that I don't become one.

Repentance is a turning to God, and not to ourselves. It's not about obsessing with our sins or marinating in self-pity (that's like holding your own puke in your mouth and thinking how bad it tastes). Repentance is looking to God, and allowing him to heal you -- asking for it, seeking His help, and fighting against our impulses that suggest other wise. It's about -- as one man said, "Keeping your eyes on the road," and not continually looking back, or driving with your eyes on the rear view mirror.

There are many people who have done great things, yet failed to learn how to be human in the fullest sense of existence. They perhaps changed the course of the world, invented new things, heaped-up fame and fortune, but left a path of destruction, disappointment and tragedy. They gained the world but lost their souls. It shouldn't be that way. Life is brief, but our souls are made eternal through Christ's resurrections from the dead

I often remind myself of the examples of Judas and Peter in the Gospels. Judas betrayed his master, and sold him for a bag of silver coins. Peter promised to go with Jesus "till the wheels fall of" but before the night was over, he denied Christ three times, and swore that he didn't know "the Man." What happened from that point is what set them eternally a part. Both "repented," Judas even brought back the dirty money and confessed that he "betrayed innocent blood." Then the poor soul went and hung himself, driven and overwhelmed by despair. Peter, however, wept bitterly, but did not despair. He lived to see Resurrection Sunday. He was one of the first to run to the empty tomb, and was restored by God, restored to life. He became a leader for the disciples and turned his failure into a victory by strengthening others. Later, under Emperor Nero, St. Peter laid down his life for the Lord whom he had once denied, and was crucified upside down.

If this life is all there is, then the most "prudent" thing to do is to sell ourselves and others for whatever we can get here and now. But as for me, I hope to live for Him who not only lived for us all, but also died for us and is RISEN. Foolishness? Well, it's smarter than my previous "wisdom" that brought me here...

There are many people who have done great things, yet failed to learn how to be human in the fullest sense of existence.

Dear Beat Within

What's up Beat? Yeah this is ya' boy Lester, I want to add a response to Ms. Mona poem (ten things I feel good about) that's in book (Beat issue) 13.09 in the standouts section.

Ms. Mona, it's a lot of people in this world men's and women's that hold and obtain those same qualities or very similar qualities are better. But I feel as though all confidence should always begin with self first, no matter what others may say or think about your confident level, no matter how people feel cause you should always be self supportive.

Ain't no one going to treat you like yourself nor is anyone's going to love you how you deserve too, but there are many men's and women's who invest their feelings and emotions each and everyday. We live in this world of unfairness and to find a man or woman who obtain similar qualities as you have is very rare in these new for not enough love and emotion or lack of knowledge of how good of a person they are and the good qualities they hold about themselves.

But due to the many relationships we've been in the past that cause pain and emotional trips. We have put an imaginary shield to protect what little feelings we have left, but for that reason alone we lose the blessings God have gives us not knowing that it was meant. Please keep your good confident and qualities cause the apple of your eye maybe right around the corner to share your goodness. It is good to share with yourself these various qualities you hold, but it is a blessing to share them with that special someone. God blesses the soul that cares, but God also rewards the spirit that loves, with eternal life in the here after which is paradise.

LESTER OLIVER

Our next writer is writing to us from a correctional facility in Lake City, Florida. Lester has a few poems that he wants to share with all you readers out there. The first one is about his significant other that he's no longer with. Lester is a brave writer since he isn't afraid to express his feelings at all. So give this brave soul a read! Btw, welcome to The Beat!

Where

Where there is love the heart is light
Where there is love the days are bright
Where there is love you help me bring me peace
Where there is love there's a tranquilly place where turmoil cease
Love change things and make the heart takes off in flight
Blessed are those who walk in love
They also walk with God up above
There is a new love in my life hopefully some day
There will be wedding bell, once I get out of prison.

You

If I had a lifetime wish
Or even a dream that could come true
I'd pray to God will all my heart
For yesterday and you
A thousand words won't bring you back
I know, because I've tried
And neither would a thousand tears
I know, because I've cried
I never wanted
The broken heart of memories
You've left behind
I only wanted you.

KALANN JOHNSON

We welcome our young colleague Kalann Johnson aka K-K, who is 17 years old. Kalann, from San Francisco, lives in SunnyDale aka Brick Homes. He's also lived in Hunters Point. He's the oldest of eight kids too. The article he has so kindly allowed us to print can also be seen in the Bayview newspaper. Hope you like! Thanks Kalann!

Please Help Us Save Hunter's Point

People in Hunters Point shouldn't have to relocate. They want improvements in their neighborhood, not to be sent somewhere else. They're being forced out. People feel like they're being targeted. New housing is being given to white and upper class people and not the current black residents.

African American residents are steadily decreasing in Hunters Point, due to gentrification. Gentrification is racist and therefore illegal, but no one is doing anything about it. It isn't just immoral to force someone out of their homes because they're black, but it's immoral to force anyone out of their homes, period. How are people forced out of their homes? The city raises their property rent and they can't afford to live in a home they own. This is odd, when you consider that Bayview/ Hunter's Point has the highest rate of home ownership in the city.

Please help stop this grave injustice. Help us find a solution that will restore this once glorious black community and not destroy it. There are shops on Third Street that have been there for years. Most of the stores are family-owned. Many streets have community gardens. Did you know we had an opera house?

In 2005, the African American population dwindled from 79,039 twenty-five years ago to 46,779 in San Francisco, from 12.4% to 6% of the city's population. In 2001, the Urban Action Committee decried the institutional racism that underdeveloped the African American areas of the city and forced the population out.

The Fillmore District of San Francisco was once a vibrant center of commercial ownership for African Americans. Of the nearly 1,000 black-owned businesses, 80% were in the Fillmore District, and nearly 100 were located on Fillmore Street. The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency demolished half a square, displacing 15,000 people, primarily African Americans.

Developers have now targeted San Francisco's predominantly African American community, Hunters Point. Something that we could do as a community and city is vote "yes" for Proposition F, which would require a minimum of affordable housing in Hunters Point. San Francisco is supposed to be a liberal city, but when wrongs such as these occur, it makes me question that belief. This should outrage you--our beautiful city being corrupted by this ugly act of greed.

Another thing that could happen is that residents from all over Hunters Point, young and old, should come together and help find a solution to our insular problems of violence, which means

squashing all beef between turfs and uniting as one, at least to some degree. We should march in protest so we can capture the attention of the media and by doing that, capture the attention of the media. And by doing that, we can capture the attention of the country, gaining support from those who can relate to our predicament. We could create our own proposition based on what we want as a community. If we can't listen to each other or help one another, how can we ask or expect anyone else to do it? There is a responsibility of the city and community to work this out, so please, let's work this out.

Dear Loved Ones

"In a full heart there is room for everything, and in an empty heart there is room for nothing."

JUAN ZAMBRANO

Our next writer kicking off The Beat Within is writing to us from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, Ca. Juan is a good dude with a great head on his shoulders. Just listen to the man speak. In his piece he clearly gives some advice that we all should follow when communicating with people in this world. We should all be open-minded, respectful, aware, and positive.

Communication

Much of our time in life is spent getting along with others. When we connect with others, our hearts are full and life is meaning. Communication is the lifeblood of an organization and the heartbeat of relationships. Most problems occur because of misunderstanding, so here are a few tips on clear communication:

Clarify Expectations - as the speaker, it is your responsibility to clarify expectations and ensure that the listener understanding your intention. Don't make assumptions that the listener should know what you mean.

Clarify Understanding - as the listener, it is your responsibility to clarify what you think you heard by paraphrasing the message. Don't assume that what you heard was what was intended.

Be Aware of Words - bridge differences by being respectful of your audience. Some words may be biased or have double-meanings. As a speaker, you don't want to intentionally offend someone.

Be Aware of your Body Language - your tone of voice, gestures, eye contact and body language communicate more than your words. If your intention is to seek to understand and relate to others, your body language will be in harmony with your words.

Be open - first impressions may be wrong, so keep an open mind and focus on the positive. Don't let your beliefs be frozen in time. Seek to understand by asking questions, being supportive and being o-pen to others views. Ask yourself if there is another way of seeing a situation.

Be Aware and Positive - look at you intention. If you are trying to prove the other person is wrong, this attitude will show through regardless of your words. If you are looking for ways to be offended, you'll always find them. The attitude that you bring to every exchange affects the outcome more than any other factor.

Be Flexible and Adaptive - you will meet people with whom you may have trouble relating either because of personality or style. Be flexible and adaptive to others. Ask yourself what you can do to improve your relationships not what they must do to meet your needs.

Attentively Listen - don't interrupt or mentally rehearse your response when someone is talking. Maintain frequent eye contact, show interest and be engaged and attentive.

Clarify Concerns - if you don't understand, take issue or disagree with someone, clarify your concerns. Sometimes it helps to paraphrase the message, "This is what I heard. Is that what you meant to say?"

Be Polite and Respectful - respect different viewpoints. Being polite and respectful goes a long way to building positive relationships. When we approach others with warmth, a spirit of good will and kindness, our hearts are full and we can find common ground and shared humanity.

With that said I conclude.

DORTELL WILLIAMS

Junior Prison Jumpsuits

Dortell Williams sends this sobering thought and information from a correctional facility in Lancaster, CA. He co-authored this piece with DeNeal Young. It seems that we should be able to find a solution to this in our "advanced" society. Thanks for posing this question, Dortell.

Have you ever thought about how your child would look in a prison jumpsuit? Perhaps you should. Since 1990 the number of juveniles locked up has ballooned 208 percent. Every year 200,000 youth are paraded through courtrooms, prosecuted as adults and shoved on the conveyor belt toward prison--the majority for non-violent offenses.

It was in the '90s that politicians and the media began to characterize America's youth as "super predators." It was predicted that waves of violent youth would invade homes, robbing, raping and killing, when in reality that ultrawave of violence was confined to the video games we provided for them.

Yet nearly every state in the union made it easier to try kids as adults. What's interesting is that during this record of youth incarceration academic and other studies were being published certifying what was so readily obvious. Children lack the cognitive capacity to think like adults. Their brains are still developing and they don't have the ability to foresee consequences the way we expect adults to; neither do they possess the maturity to restrain juvenile impulses.

The bottom line is that, well, children are children. As a result of this failed social experiment, research has shown that situating children next to adults in penal institutions makes them more likely to be repeat offenders, and more violent ones at that. Studies also show that incarcerated children may experience more emotional distress, physical abuse and suicides than their adult counterparts. Besides, there were already a host of laws for the rare few that committed the unthinkable. It was completely unnecessary to widen the net for the non-violent, too.

Politicians, in their typical exploitation of crime and race to outdo one another on tough-on-crime policies, have codified a gross imbalance by allowing prosecutors, instead of judges, to decide if our children are tried as adults. Though children who represent ethnic demographics are disproportionately incarcerated and tried as adults, the likelihood of prison for children of every social group has shown a manifold increase in the last 20 years. Navy blues, pumpkin oranges, off-whites and even stripes are available; how would your child look in a prison jumpsuit?

EUSI P. KATIBA

Our next writer is writing to us from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, Ca. Eusi is a deep writer with a lot to say about life. Although he doesn't preach in any of his pieces, each poem relays a message. So listen up!

Memories of the Deceased

The storm screams
Releasing a thunderous rage
Drowning out action
Subduing the cries of piteous mourners
Watching the spot
Where bullets swarmed their prey
Not witnessing docile investigators
Scrape up D.N.A.
Never consoling
The enraged mother
Fervently snatching down
Yellow tape
Shading her eyes
From the black van
With death inscribe on its side
She screams
A transcending howl
"Please baby don't die,"
While trenched-out detectives
Persistently question the innocent
Hunting for clues
Never shared
In police company
The sun blazes
Offering new eras of life
Shining on neighbors
Surfacing the crime scene
Candles and pictures leading the eulogy
Intertwined with jerseys
Plastic wrap Godfathers
Shouting rest in peace
Always leaving enough space
For the dismembered bandana's
Cascaded over blood stained concrete
By street warriors
Memories fade from pictures
Flames of candles
Falter in the breeze
Failing the stench of death
Hope beams
Bursting forward with the sun
Filtering through nature
Searching for the heartbeat
Of the lonely
With no strength to carry on
She continues to weep
Hailing profanities
At a ghetto
That inflamed the murder rate
"Is it wrong to question faith?"
She cries
Begging the starting portrait of
Jesus
Meeting her dejected gaze
"Why did he have to die?"
She asks
Rocking into another time
While the memory of her son
Descending
Played over and over in her mind.

Chronology

Pages fall,
Slipping millions of feet from walls
Time takes on a form
Perpetuating
No meaning through this majestic journey
Moments become mere ritualistic habits
Leaving the soul to yearn
Reaching from a crippled posture
To escape the voided life cycles
Love moves phases ahead
Into an unknown future
Pulling hope
That has been conquered
Surrendered by reality
Life
Now seems
To be a blank page
Falling
Forever
Into space darkness
With no shackled hand to stop it.

Redemption Speaks

Hours passes into eternity shifting the restless
Deeper into the thralldom of confinement paving the way for
Insanity
That wrestles consciousness.
Mysterious formations constructed from
A souls essence to survive universal engagements
Unravels
As evil prevail.
The abyss is forever accepting creating substance for oblivion
Human properties suspend in eternal hibernation
Destroying
The units of life
There is an image of mother who silently calls
Disappearing into the cerebrum, ceremoniously wishing to repent
The ungrateful spirit
Tears soak into the foam clouds of dissolved
Psychiatric pills painting stories of the Penitentiary
On confined hands
Man suddenly becomes consumed whispering through
The tunnel of kissed palms
Searching
For the pathway that leads to the profound.

There is an image of mother who silently calls
Disappearing into the cerebrum, ceremoniously wishing to repent

A Letter For Michael Orozco

Long before The Beat had the good fortune to find Michael Cabral in our pages, he was already writing. Here, in addition to his very moving letter expressing his gratitude to and sorrow at the death of Beat artist, Michael Orozco (while in federal prison), he also shares two raps. The first, "Bravado," is a song he wrote when he was in the 7th grade, and yet it already shows the brilliance that we have come to know in his later writing. Even at that young age, he was declaring his independence from the older homies who were telling him how to live his life. The second, "Messin' With Me," which he just now wrote (age 21), cries out the truths about the children whose lives are imprisoned by poverty and life's circumstances, and his rage at the prison reality that — even after he walks "free" — he will never be able to escape. Michael shares his wisdom from his cell at Salinas Valley State Prison.

Dear Michael,

Word of your passing has just reached me. I am sitting here in my prison cell staring, in complete disbelief, at The Beat cover with your last piece of Beat within art on it, your final piece of Beat Within art. Are you really gone?

Chances are you wouldn't even recognize my name if you heard it. But in my world, you have been a close friend to me for years. I first met you (nearly five years ago) when I was 17 years old, fresh into juvenile hall facing a life sentence. My life, my world was a wreck. It was spinning out of control, and all I wanted was to know what was going on. Naturally, I was scared — the unknown is a terrifying being.

Then you came along and began painting pictures (literally) for me of imprisonment and spiritual freedom of drug addiction and frustration, of history and self-empowerment. With a sketch pad and a full heart, you explained to me the highs, the lows, the general realities of the life I was going to be living. Of course, none of your stories eliminated my fear of what lie ahead, of prison life, but you did let me know what was coming… Thank you!

I don't know how many times you told me that I would be all right, but you did. And you told me how to be all right — with a strong will and a free mind. Thank you for that, too.

You are not the only friend I had teaching me how to do time and live life. No. Plenty of times I sat in my juvenile hall cell (and county jail cell, and prison cell) and almost greedily took in the wisdom of Mr. Dwight Abbott, Mr. Israel Perez, Mr. Ray Sanchez, Jr., Ms. Rhonda Jones… the list of my friends is endless. I appreciate all of your lives. But to you, Michael Orozco, though my heart aches for your passing, my soul rejoices for your Freedom…

I will miss you.

With great respect, your friend

Michael Dominic Cabral

Bravado

(Verse 1)
I'm not your effin' kid
So don't tell me how to live
You can have what I give
I'm not your bitch or your dummy
They call me "Tuffy"
Without your influences
I don't give a damn what no one says
"Do it like that" and "Do it like this"
Bitch, this is my life
My words, and my rights
But still you want to make and break me
Take me down
But I'm gonna go the way I wanna go
So hate me now
Then you wanna trip and talk your shhh
And you tell me I can kick it
But it's not your decision
Punks like you don't get the privilege
To speak — my name — out loud

(Bridge)

How you gonna say I'm wrong
When you're always fallin'?
Where you gonna turn
When your conscience starts callin'?
Trapped and left alone
Like you tried to make me feel
Mass destruction to your soul
In time I will prevail

(Chorus)

Dumb asses come and go
There's no rhythm to your soul
And in the past, if by chance we meet
I wipe the dust up from my feet

(Verse 2)
When you become me
You can direct me
But you're not me
You just copy
Everything that I say, everything that I do
And you tell me how to make it "better"
"If only you said this,
This would be somethin'"
But you're a piece of shhh
Your opinion about me is worth nothin'
Yet you're still gonna give it
And want me to listen
You better be kiddin'
'Cause I'm gonna get pissed
And you're gonna get hit
So get on with your bad self
Leave me the hell alone
Stop telling me how to live my life
And start living your own

(Verse 3)
I'm sick of people telling me
Who the hell I'm supposed to be
Why won't you just let me live
Get off my back with all your shhh
I'm going straight through the turns of life
Because of you, every day and every night
I do not know who the hell I am
Lost in the end, and I just began

(Chorus, X2)

Dumb asses come and go
There's no rhythm to your soul
And in the past if by chance we meet
I wipe the dust up from my feet

Messin' With Me...

(Chorus)
Every which way that I go
I'm trapped, I can't take it any more
I'm 'bout to love my mind
I'm on the verge of insanity
I've tried to run and hide
But all this time won't seem to let me go
If I decide to fly
My life just keeps on messin' with me

(Verse 1)
Is God really listenin'?
I'm fishin' for answers
Searching for peace
But al I get is disaster
Surrounded by snitches and bastards
It's cold-hearted
Or is it just that my enemies
Pray a little harder than me?
Being imprisoned
Ain't even the beginnin'
Been sinned against since me
And all of my homies were children
We're stuck in a sick world
Where little kids
Are hungry in the streets
And begging for imprisonment
They'd rather live in the pen
And expect to die
Than watch their back on the streets
And only hope to survive
It's sickening how much
We really don't got to lose
Finding in miles of poverty
Only nine millimeters of refuge
Now trigger fingers
Are no bigger than the trigger is
Couldn't read the signs of hope
The system left us illiterate
No child left behind?
How dare you disrespect me
If not for The Beat Within
Everybody would have left me

(Chorus)
Every which way that I go
I'm trapped, I can't take it any more
I'm 'bout to love my mind
I'm on the verge of insanity
I've tried to run and hide
But all this time won't seem to let me go
If I decide to fly
My life just keeps on messin' with me

(Verse 2)
I'm in love with a dream
But reality is envious
So even if they set me free
I'll never know the end of this
I'll never know the end of prison
Never know the end of its stress
Never be able to make up
For everything I missed
Tried as a grown man
Shackled in sickness
A life sentence before
I could buy a pack of cigarettes
It's insane to me
But I'm not the only one
Now I'm afraid of having kids
For what the system might do to my son
We're younger and younger now
Prison's become a day care
Do they care?
I'm tired of their fake care
Their vision of rehabilitation
More like retaliation
For complainin' about intolerance
And their impatience
And their ignorance
To what the streets are really like
I'm only human
All I wanna do is survive
I'm sorry for living life
The way you left it for me to live it
But I was just a kid
You punk sons of bitches

(Chorus)
Every which way that I go
I'm trapped, I can't take it any more
I'm 'bout to love my mind
I'm on the verge of insanity
I've tried to run and hide
But all this time won't seem to let me go
If I decide to fly
My life just keeps on messin' with me

(Verse 3)
Now I'm searching for peace
But all I seem to find is pieces
In racist war zones
Long gone is hope and Jesus
Enemies don't even know
Who to hate any more
So I pick up a pen
Try to defend who I am
But I can't pretend
That my sinnin' ways will ever end
It's embedded in me
To live, keep pushin'
Do whatever it takes
But for faith, I keep lookin'
It seems every time
I get a little bit of slack
I underestimate the beast
And my freedom gets taken back
But I can't get mad
I was born into this truth
The only lie I was ever told
Was it would get better soon
Maybe it's true
But not if we don't make it
And how we gonna make it
While we're teaching kids hatred?
I'm sick to my stomach
Bleeding with each heartbeat
I swear
This life keeps on messin' with me...

Dishonorable Fate

Our next writer is writing to us from something, Ca. We first met Mr. Weed at our weekly workshops when he was incarcerated in Hillcrest Juvenile (San Mateo County) some good six years back. He even worked here at The Beat as a part time intern back in the days. But life takes mysterious twists and turns and now he finds himself in the State Pen. But nevertheless, Weed is a great writer, and still continues to communicate with us and send us incredible pieces. So peep Tom Weed outwho write us from a correctional facility in Washington State/

Bzzzzz…

"Mmmmrah!"

Bzzzzz

" Ugh!"

Bzzzzz

"Okay, shhh!" with both eyes still glued shut, I smack my hand down on the cheap imitation oak nightstand a few times before coming to the square box. I open one eye slowly to see what the thing reads. 9:30. Wholly crap it's early. With a faint, faraway sense of satisfaction, I slap the top of my alarm clock, hoping I hit OFF instead of SNOOZE.

Rolling over, I stretch my hand out to the wall and bring it down, wrapping my arm around air. I open both eyes to find nothing but wrinkled sheets and empty bed.

"What the…" where's Meghan? " Oh well, funk it." I close my eyes again and try to run back to that wonderful dream I was having.

I'm in a garage I've never seen before, but somehow, the me in my dream knows it's my garage. The big roll top door is up and outside the sun is shining. I'm sitting behind a white Pearl drum set drinking a Bud.

"What do you guys want to play next?" I ask in between sips.

"I dunno," my best friend, Dean, responds.

"How 'bout something from the Eagles?"

"Mmkay."

SLAM!

I open both eyes with a start. Meghan is standing by the door pulling on her nice coat. It's a really cheap thing, but she seems to like it…says it's "professional." Whatever.

"Where you going? It's like five in the morning."

"No, sweetie, it's like ten, and I have to hurry if I'm going to make my interview in half an hour."

"Interview?"

"Yeah. My interview." Meg looks at me for a second. Then sits on the bed to pull on some shoes. "Don't you remember, I have an interview at the Gap today."

"You never said nothing about any interview."

"Sure I did baby. I told you last night before we went out. That's why I wouldn't drink much. Anyways, I gotta run. I'm going to be late." She pulls my blanket back and puts her hand on my bare chest. She bends forward to give me quick kiss on the cheek, then gets up. I notice she forgets to pull the blanket back up, but I let that go. She grabs he purse and reaches for the glass doorknob.

"Bullshhh," I mutter, making sure it's loud enough for Meghan to hear.

"Huh?"

"Nothing…." I blurt out, then turnover, pulling the think blanket over my shoulder.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing…have fun wherever you're going."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe something about this surprise interview you have to leave for instead of going out for breakfast like we usually do."

"We usually go out for breakfast at two in the afternoon Tom. And how are we supposed to pay for all this eating out when neither of us has a job?"

"Hey, I got money! If you're worried about money, cook something instead."

"If we had a kitchen, I would!"

"We have the hot plate and that rice cooker I got you last week."

"It's still not a kitchen! Dang it Tom, you should be supportive of me trying to get a job. Instead, I get more of your jealous crap? What the heck?"

"Who's being jealous? I was just asking you… asking you… whatever! What, should I be jealous?"

"Oh my gosh! I have to go, I'm going to be late. I love you too…"

"BEEZY!"

Wow, that door is loud…almost as loud as that damn

Bzzzzz…

"Grrr…" I grab the alarm clock and throw it across the room, not like that's very far. I think the thing breaks, but who cares, I hate it when she makes me feel like this. Maybe I should call her on the cell and tell her how she made me break the alarm clock. Aww screw it.

"Guess I'm not getting any sleep today."

I throw the covers off me as if I were trying to put a hole in the wall. It wouldn't be the first one… I walk over to the window, scratching my stomach. Damn, when did I get so skinny? I really need to eat more. Radiant light storms into the little room with the power of truth itself. "Wow, ten o' clock is bright!"

I close the curtain again, should of never opened it. I grab my phone and walkout the door. Meghan was right about one thing, it would be nice to have our own kitchen. And our own bathroom. I hate walking down the hall every time I have to pee. It's always cold, and no matter what time it is, it always smells like Pakistani food. Oh well, all I can afford right now is a residential hotel. Sure the shared bathroom sucks… (the roaches, chipped paint, constant noise, endless traffic up and down the stairs day and night)… but it's cheap, and it's mine! No curfew, nobody telling me what to do, no drunk mom crying over "The Young and The Restless." I'm sure I'll be able to afford better soon.

Sitting on the stained toilet, I look at my phone. Four new messages. "Hmmm. I never heard it ring. I must've been out cold." Come to think of it, now that I'm more awake I can better appreciate the intensity of my handover.

I hold the 1 key on m Nokia till it automatically dials my voicemail. The wonders of modern technology.

"Metro PCS…"comes the female recorded voice. I punch in 1 3 3 7. Every time put in my security code I feel cool. Leet Elite. Yeah, that's me.

"You have four unheard messages." Brenda tells me.

That's what I call the voice. Brenda. I can picture a country redhead making all the recordings for Metro PCS. They probably hired her from some 900 number catalogs full of sexy voices.

"First new message."

"Mr. Weed, this is Jaime Bronkers, your probation officer. I went by Target to check on you, and Kirt, the manager, informed me you were fired over two weeks ago. I need you to…" I press the seven key and its skips his message.

"Next new message:"

"Thomas, this is your mother…" that lucky seven again.

"Next new message:"

"Mr. Weed, this is Jaime Bronkers again…"

There's that seven key again. Seems like a recurring theme eh?

"Next new message:"

"Hello. My name is David Sommers, and I'm calling to talk to you about…" Seven…

"Damn bill collectors" I mutter.

"You have no more new messages…First skipped message:"

"Thank you, Brenda, that will be all." I press the END key.

On my way back to my room, Mrs. Putnammin, the landlord yells at me, "Mr. Thomas!"

"Yes ma'am?"

"Some guy come to see you. Name Mr. Sommers! I tell him "no visitors"! You tell him too!"

"Ma'am I don't know the guy, but I'll be sure to tell him."

Mrs. Putnammin stares at me from behind her dark puffy cheeks. Something about her reminds me of a hawk. No, less majestic. Maybe a vulture, or a strung out stork. "Good!"

I shut my door quickly and lock it. Ok, so he wasn't a bill collector. Maybe I should listen to that message again. I'll do it in a while… I'm still kinda mad.

I press in the keys 240-5454 and press SEND on my phone. The familiar ring back tone plays Dean's favorite song:

"I was gonna clean my room, but then I got high. I was gonna get up and find a broom but then I got high"

"Uugh… What's up….?"

"Bro, you aren't going to believe what she did this morning!"

"Dude… it's like… five in the…friggin morning!"

"No, it's like ten…" I chuckle to myself in reflection of the same words just fifteen minutes earlier. "Anyways, leave your door unlocked, I'm about to come over."

"Umm…can't I like…call you…like… when I wake up?"

"I'll smoke you out…"

"Ugh…crap…whatever. When will you be here?"

"Probably in a half hour or so. I just got to throw some clothes and jump on my board."

"Ok, I'll leave the door open…just make sure Lonnie's car gone before you come in. I think he's about to leave for work in a sec."

"Alright, I'll see you in a bit."

Stay tuned for Chapter 2.

"Shhh"

From my cell I hear the murmur of rolling thunder
Oh, so many voices…
The same game, over and over,
Lets see who can say the dumbest stuff the loudest!
Bars tend to provide the least insulation to sound
How sad,
Hey, I have one idea for a NEW game
Now, I know change is a bad word in prison
Leads to all kind of culture shock and stuff
But what the heck
We've been playing your game for months now
Pleeeeeease!
Can we just play around?
OK SHUT THE HECK UP SO I CAN WRITE!!
Sorry, I didn't mean to yell
I guess I lost already
Kids, stay out of jail…
If not for your family,
If not for yourself
Then do it from my fragile lobes
QUIET, I'M TRYING TO THINK!

Hey

I thought you guys might enjoy a couple new pieces. I don't know if you remember or not, but back when I was going through Hillcrest, I used to give you guys weekly essays that broke down various philosophic and religious views that I had been contemplating at the time. I labeled them "Life" part 1,2,3, and so on. I forgot where I left off, but I guess I will pick up at 22, since I am now 22 years old (gosh, so young to be in prison!)

Another piece I wrote after talking to my cellie for a couple hours. He is in here for vehicular manslaughter. Instead of getting more time for being drunk, he got half the normal sentence, and a drug rehab for being "sick". I guess these days being drunken killer is a curable disease.

The third is a short intro as to what its like in prison. SO LOUD! All the time! No peace… ever! Hehe, well, I hope you like them. Find me a Pen Pal please!

Life-Part 22

The package reads: Pillowpak-contains a HARMLESS adsorbent for humidity and odor.

Turn the strange paper rattle over, and in big letters you see: Hazard! Do Not Eat! Ne Pas Avaler No Comer

Contents may be toxic.

Umm, maybe I am not that educated or something but last time I checked, harmless and toxic! Do not eat meant two very different things. Especially when the "Harmless" item is found in children's shoes, bottles of aspirin, and Power Ranger action figures with fully possible limbs and removable lifelike helmets.

Ok, I know they share nothing in common, but for some inexplicable reason, my bewilderment reminds me of an old joke: How many blondes does it take to fix a broken heart?

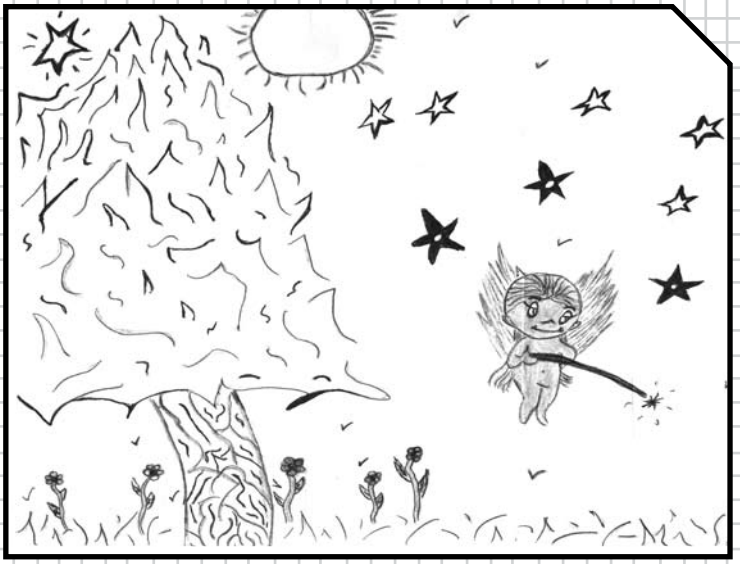
It's a trick question, don't even bother…trust me. I spent years trying to solve the equation, to no avail. I think the trouble lies in the riddle itself. I am twenty-two years old, and you'd think by now I would have figured it out-you cannot solve a problem with more problems!

Yes, its true, I had my heart broken, and thinking it was the chick doing it to me out of some primordial sensual urge to find a better, more perfect, less female, more feminine woman.

Twenty break-ups, three heart attacks, and thirteen nights without sleep spent sitting alone at my table listening to Justin Timberlake taking shots of Don Julio Anejo while screaming "what goes around, goes around, goes around" at my poor cat later, now I see the faults of my ways.

Maybe its time for a new approach. If only I could work up the courage… I've had my eye on this one, very special person. I don't think they'd even notice me, really. Its not like I'm some big baler, shot caller (although, some do say I can make it rain when I really want to) and I'm not some Rico Suave player pimp… but maybe, just maybe!

Awww screw it, I'm going to just do it. I'ma ask myself out to a cup of coffee, for a chance to get to know me better… no anterior motives mind you, I'm no pervert!



"Driving While Inoculated" (The Cure For Insanity)

Some say sickness hides inside the cornel human mind that it resides in sunken cells lurking, hard to find an inert sense of senseless sensibility…

"Shoot, it's raining again"
We make words to weed the grass of human incapacity hoping maybe help might be the saving a soul needs for every curse, or crime, science has no cure…

"This is the blood of my blood"
Religious rulers read the rules of spiritual salvation they correct the wrongful ways of sin across the nation tell us all to follow him, whoever he was…

"Friends don't let friends drive drunk"
Maybe, after all, madness makes the heart grow fonder for simple sacrifice alone is sure to make us stronger the things we do for things we do desire…

Road may ice when wet

Our next writer is no stranger at all. He's writing to us from Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron, Mo. Herbert really breaks it down for all you readers out there. Herbert discusses about how America does nothing to help parolees that are released from prison. He talks about violence, amongst races, and amongst each other. Herbert gets very political and speaks some real life facts. So give him a read!

What's Weird About It?

It was recently reported that faced with overcrowded penitentiaries, the British government instead of spending hundreds-of-millions of pounds of building more prisons, it would grant early release to 25,500 prisoners. Since that would take away the prisoners "free housing", the government would provide transition expenses for "room and board" with which to live until their terms expired. In America, the largest numerical and per capita incarcerator in the word, this announcement was labeled "Weird ."
My question is, why? It is obvious that people who leave prison without jobs or places to live and food are unlikely to stay out of jail for long and will have to resort to begging or crime purely to survive. The lack of such support is a major reason, two-thirds of parolees are rearrested and even higher for those who max out on their prison sentences.

I'll be given $5.00 in cash a bus ride to Kansas City, Missouri and homeless upon my prison release. That's if I have $5.00 in my prison account, by then, of my own money, as of the many prisoners across the country. Many facilities do not even give gate monies upon release nor assistance in transitional housing etc. The prison industrial complex is a big money business. They make so much per head to keep the beds filled each year, so they keep a constant overcrowding problem and a constant flow of prisoners coming in to keep beds filled and to keep soaking taxpayers for more and more funds, for problems they create.

In America, the land of the incarcerated, though, instead of providing effective preparatory or transitional assistance, substance addicted felons are barred for life from temporary welfare assistance. In Missouri moreover, the governor line item vetoed the salaries for prison drug abuse counselors from the latest budget. (In the meth capital of the world) despite high recidivism rates, this veto cut more than half the treatment resources.

A decade ago, congress obtusely expelled prisoners from the Pell Grant program, resulting in the closure of numerous prison college programs across the country. All the while, everyone acknowledged that such training is the most effective and efficient rehabilitative opportunity, with paroled graduates having the highest employment rates and the lowest recidivism rates for all released offenders.

In the show-me state of Missouri, not only were multiple college programs closed with the loss of the federal funding, but also less than 2% of the current correction budget supported essential education. Even more distressingly, two years ago, the minimal GED programs in three of the state's largest prisons were shuttered as well, erasing hope for any education, so quite naturally ex-convicts will fail, one cannot even get employment in this day and age without at least having a GED, but as I'd said before, that's all part of the plot to keep the prisons filled, to scam the tax-payers out of more of their hard earned dollars, so politicians and big business can profit off their loss. It's all-apart of the capitalistic-game.

A study published in the "New England Journal of Medicine," reports of the U.S. justice system is doing an inadequate job easing the transition of released offenders. During the first two weeks of freedom, for every major cause, the risk of death for ex-convicts is nearly 13 times that of the general population. University of California at Irvine criminologist, Joan Petersilia, comments that this "highlights the critical period immediately following and ex-convicts prison release, which corrections policy has not yet really even focused on," but they don't give a crap!

The death rates are a reflection of the poor, uneducated, and unhealthy prisoner population in general. More than seventy percent of those released have been diagnosed with drug and alcohol dependence, and mentally ill, with the vast majority of them not receiving and treatment whatsoever while imprisoned. (Which tax-payers dollars are supposed to be funding),

Explaining the extreme spike in death rates, Dr. Clarissa Krinsky of the University of New Mexico Health Center, observes that release from incarceration "is a time of enormous social stressors. One's are suddenly without a home, without a job ,food, money etc".

Dr. Jacqueline Talasky, a professor of clinical medicine at UC San Francisco, who studied the transition from prison to freedom, comments that lives could be saved by offering drug treatment, transitional housing, and other services to newly released ex-convicts. But that's not gonna happen, it's not part of their revolving cycle of returning prisoners and the systems other big-money making scams, to fill beds and bank accounts.

In Missouri, on the other hand as part of their money hungry making scams, they charge convicts "victim fee's" that the victims don't even get one cent of. Parolees are released immediately owing a monthly sixty dollars supervision fee, and indebted for tens if not hundreds-of-thousands of dollars for incarceration reimbursement expenses, one's are even charged booking fee's by city jails when their first arrested whether their guilty of their charges or not, it's all apart of the big-money scam.

So with little economically viable education if any at all, untreated substance abuse dependencies, being legally barred from numerous occupations, haphazard to sparse transitional support, no mental health after care treatment, or job skills, and the burden of crushing debt, it's of little surprise so many fail to "adjust" to freedom.

Plus, can any human being after being locked in a cage like an animal, treated less than human, harassed, degraded, 24 by 7 for a number of years, be expected to act civilized once returned so society? Can anyone truly place the blame on the ex-convict when he or she rapes, robs, or kills someone upon release? Besides what's a person to do, starve to death or steal food etc.

America the land of incarceration and political greed spends sixty billion of tax-payers dollars annually to incarcerate more than two million souls, (those the police don't kill or are sent off to wars to be exterminated) releasing six-hundred-thousand a year only to have two-thirds of them recidivate. The US continues to incarcerate at onetime or another the sixteen-million strong caste felons, ex-felons and those they frame for political and capitalistic reasons, while the rest of the world crazily seeks way to reduce crime and save lives through prevention and transitional policies.

In America we obviously know better. We divert limited public resources to build ever more prisons instead of using that money to house and feed the poor and homeless, to lower college tuition, and provide health care for the uninsured etc, etc, etc.

Now that's weird! Again I ask, why doesn't America treat all of it's citizens equal? In love and solidarity-

HERBERT SCHWEIGERT cont.

Guilty Until Proven Wealthy

The vast majority of women in prison are there for what's stemmed or cited as "property crimes", such as check forgery, check kiting, and illegal credit use. Women bear the brunt of policies that criminalize poverty, being sent to jail and placed on probation for failing to earn enough money to survive. At the same time, the safety net has been slashed, forcing many women to choose between staying out of jail or feeding their kids.

80% of women in prison report incomes of less than $2,000 per year in the year before their arrest, and 92% report incomes under $10,000. Since 1980, the percentage of women in prisons has increased by more than 300%.

In 1979, fewer than half of the women in prison were there for nonviolent crimes. Today, 75% are there for non-violent crimes and is almost that high in men's prisons. White collar crime drains over $200 billion per year from the US economy, while the economic cost of "street-crime" is less than $5 billion per year. Finding a white collar criminal in most prisons, however, would be no small task. Those who can afford high-priced lawyers and witnesses rarely do jail time, while those who can't must make do with court appointed attorneys who seldom have the time or resources to defend their clients properly.

The savings and loan frauds have cost US taxpayers at least $150 billion if not more in the 90's alone. The US now imprisons more than 40 times as many drug offenders as it did in 1980, most of them low-level dealers and users. At the same time more than 4 or $500 billion in drug profits illegally goes through US banks each year while convictions for money laundering their doing are few and far between.

Violence

There's a lot of gang violence in the US, Brown against Black, Black against Black, Black against Brown, White against Black in inner-city ghetto slums especially in CA and New York and even more so between Black and Latino gangs which is and everyday murderous affair. One's need to encourage Black and Latino communities to enter into a dialogue like civilized nations and destroy myths, rumors and gossips that is raising tension. A lot of innocent people die in these senseless gang-wars.

What is not a myth, is that unless one's in these communities and God intervenes, then a lot of people will suffer, gang-affiliated or not. These demented young gang members are out there killing children. It's a race-related issue and state governments keep lying to it's citizens because they don't want a race war on their watch but that's what it is anyways and it's gonna get worse. One of the most notorious deadly gangs gangs that ever existed in history was out of Detroit, Michigan in the 1940's and 1950's was the "Purple Gang".

Law enforcement and the government didn't have no problem destroying that gang. Why do they act like they got a problem now, I believe because if their not the originator of the problem then their apart of it. It's a deterrent-camouflage, cover-up for the chaos their involved in on a higher scale. When people are concentrating on street gang violence they're not paying attention to what the corrupt government system is up to. It's an old gang tactic creating a delusion or distraction while the real crime somewhere or by someone else is being committed. Yes, there's a race problem in LA/NY ect. And our government created it centuries ago. "People Wake Up"!

Keep Your Distance

For over 18 years, I worshipped heroin and cocaine
Such took my loved one, freedom, soul and belongings
I couldn't make it as a poor man stealing
Dealers prey on the weak and will trade dope
For our rent, our ride, even our pride, and wedding ring
My freedom, high and my escape from my
Inner problems, demons and devils, was short lived
There's gotta be another way to reach the sky
One due or hit too many… a thousand ain't never enough
That white-horse of heroin and gorilla of coke ain't no joke
Reach deep inside, let go
Through God's grace, you'll see him eye to eye
Not having to live to perpetrate a lie
If you haven't done any dope lately
You've done you delusional
Disordered mind tremendous thing
Please put that drink and glass down
The Lord's our lighthouse, savior, strength
And soaring wings
Lean on him
He can handle it.

DNA

Most people cannot get DNA testing done in prisons and on Death-Row, which could prove their innocents, simply because its not free. Look at all the innocent people whom haven't exonerated and freed through it that could afford it. One's need to either donate funding for this or push for free DNA testing!

Someone's rights, freedom and life depends upon it. Don't wait until you or someone you know or care about gets framed before you decide to act. If you don't act then the next innocent person they condemn or execute will also be your fault. Try to explain that to God on Judgment Day.

My Final Journey

I'm strapped to a gurney
For my final journey
For all to see
Premeditated homicide
Is what it will be
The poisonous liquid will flow
Through the I.V. below
My tear stained eye's will shut
My lungs will collapse
And my heart will burst
And my body will be driven off
In a pearly white hearse
In the name of justice
Is what they will cry
But the justice they seek
Is nothing more than a lie
For it was all quite phony
With false hear-say testimony
The entire trial was a sham
Yes, one big phony scam
For I had no support
From the US court
Who assigned me a public pretender
An incompetent legal defender attorney
And that's why I'm of
On my final journey.

Waking Up Again

It is a stone-cold fact that prison is surely not an accommodating place. It is not now, nor has it ever meant to be such, but there is something beyond the constant din of the prison cat-walks and hallways, the loud barking and growling at the weight lifting stations, the cold, ugly, evil stares across the prison exercise-yard to assert dominance, the inevitable blood bath of yet another fight, or gang rape, the constant unappetizing substances serves as food on filthy, greasy timeworn plastic meal trays, the unnecessary harassment we have to endure 24/7 at the hands of bigoted, uneducated guards, and the inexorable tedium of another miserable boring-butt day: For me, it is those first few minutes when I wake in the morning (to the hideous smell of my own bunkies farts) that hit me the hardest.

The heaviness of sleep clings to me until I feel the slow clearing of mind. I start to shake off the dreams and come to the realization that I am still in prison. I have been here for years with only a few more months to go. Why it holds me to my paper-thin mattress on my steel bunk bed after all these years escapes me. I just lay there. I hear the early morning silence throughout the cell-block-a deafening silence, it says, "Herbert you ended up in prison."

TBW members and readers it seems too surreal. Prison, I see all the foolish mistakes, the numerous misgivings about life, the selfishness. Yet the equation never adds up in my mind. Prison, as I leave my bed, it is not courage, but perseverance that sustains me in this madness.

As I go through the morning ritual, the remainder of the day's bump and grind faces me-work, school, workout, reading, writing, poetry, and articles for publications and so on. I shake off those first movements of regret and press ahead. Although I have lost much coming to prison, I believe I have gained more. I am becoming the man that I was meant to be; the man that I always wanted to be. Friends, we only have one life offered to us and we must make the most of it.

No one alive is without error. It is what we choose to do after that which counts the most. And I still have much to do, now, today, as I remain in prison and upon my release. I have done quite a bit of time over the years my incarceration in institutions in juveniles, jails, detention centers and prisons, and I know many of my brother and sisters in prisons may never get back to the free world again. But friends there is something for each of us to do-each day, right now.

If I believed all of what they had said about me, I would have given up years ago. Yes, some of it is true of the man that got arrested those many years ago. What they cannot see is who is before them today. They may never see it. I am not waiting either. I see myself by the fruits of my labors. I get one shot today and I am going to make a difference. I shake off the past just as I shake off the morning's slumber. I have learned much from this experience and it is time to do something positive with what I have learned. There is a reason I am right here, right now, and I have a purpose. I have this feeling that what I am doing today is building the foundation for everything else that will follow. I won't try to limit my future by attempting to imagine all that life has in store for me, and you.

Don't buy into the hype that you are worthless, that your past crimes will keep you from a future happiness, that this is just "dead time" and that you cannot be working towards a positive, constructive, meaningful life ahead, because friends it is just that hype. Look around you with new eyes and see that where you are today is offering us something. Now just find out what something is for you, and drink in every last drop!

Holding On

How do you hold on to a bag full of whishes?
A sack full of invisible hugs and kisses
Magical seeds made of nothing
Faith needed to help them grow into something
Maybe grow into something great, like one dream come true
Or even open doors of opportunity just waiting for you
A wish for freedom from behind bars
A wish for love to cover hurtful scars
A wish for a place one could call home
A wish for courage to keep one strong
A wish for a friend to always be by one's side
A wish to wipe away all sadness one feels from inside
A wish to continue to cope
You hold on to a bag of wishes
With a rope made of hope.

To All Members, and Supporters and Contributors of The Beat Within"

Some people have a gift
A gift to understand others
And see things differently…
They can relate to many points of view
Listen, understand
And yet manage to keep and hold their own…
Unfortunately there are others
Who cannot see past the skin
Past our, or their mistakes,
Yet when you listen
With an inner loving ear
I know you see more than inmates…
I once heard that a hero is an anonymous hero
One that takes no credit
For his or her good actions,
To me each of you are true hero's
In you I see what I could have been
And choose not to
And everything I can still become
If I change…
You let me know I'm not alone
And show me it's never too late
To make one moment at a time
This world, country, and prison
A better place,
You are each my teacher at heart
And you have many things
My own parents could not teach
Although I've read these things
In the pages of many books…
At this point in my life
Freedom of expression is all I get
And I know it is not much
Therefore I express appreciation
Appreciation because you cheer me up
And bring me hope and help me cope
Every time I believe in what you do
Not what you've accomplished in life
But I thank you for always being you
And not what others think of you
I couldn't have a better teacher than you
I thank and love you each much
And like the song says,
"I can fly higher than and eagle
because you are the wind beneath my wings!"
Thanks for being you and all that you can each do.

ALEX SHELTON

Our next writer is writing to us from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, Ca. Alex has been a Beat contributor for a long time now. His topics really reflect about the streets and growing up in them. He gets very descriptive and in the short story he has in store for you readers. He does not hesitate to give it to you raw and uncut straight from the streets like if he was still standing on that curb. But his story has a moral to it, and hopefully you readers can catch it. So without any more interruptions, give Alex a read!

Lived To See "G's" Buried One After The Other

Every time I think of what I've lived through, my soul recoils from the idea of ever crossing it's threshold again!!

It was near 7:30 that morning when I drifted the Regal into the apartment complex parking lot of my homeboy's girlfriend, who was seven months pregnant.

I stepped out of the car into the wet pavement and into the balcony which provided cover from the cold rain.

My homeboy spent the phone money, so now her phone was cut off - and here I was pounding my fist on the door to give the news about "Slasher."

The door opened slowly, "Hi L, what's up"

I edged closer and put my hand on her shoulder, I was silent from sheer inability to follow, but said sharply "Slasher is dead," "He overdosed."

The coldness of her expression deepened to disgust and blame,

She exploded "For heaven's sake why didn't you keep him out of trouble?" "The drugs, drinking, the violence," "and he is gone now!"

"Look at my stomach L! Now the baby has no daddy" "I hate you and your gang" "Get out of here"

Before I could say anything the door slammed shut, and I felt bad for her and the baby! Was this really my fault??

Thoughts of homeboys and homegirls that died came whirling. I was without a hope for my future that developed into a moral hazard of the powerful hold we seemed to have over the gangs' thoughts and actions. So therefore, telling a "G" not to participate and stay home and do good was an insult. And that's why we never said "no"/or complained 'cause it was a sign of weakness! ...

Today is 24 years later! I remember clearly: One day before "Slasher" died at 17 years old. He would always talk about his baby, which was a girl, and I was very happy for him, but I knew in my heart that something bad could happen...

It was Saturday morning of 1984 - and I met up with him at his sister's house, where he was sitting on the front porch on a milk crate sipping on a beer when I strolled up the front walk.

"What's crackin fool" as he gave me a sleepy grin and handed me a can of beer, I slipped my matches and struck a light to the angel dust/his high was heroin which was bought Friday. I got 2 burglaries lined-up for Monday "Slash" you down with it??

C'mon now bro-"you know homies come first."

I could see it in his eyes as we talked about his younger sister that was stabbed at a party in 1983, she was 15 years old and with a boy, who was left without a mom - and I remember the icy stares of family and friends of some I didn't even recognize, sitting in the front, sobbing,

I walked down the long central aisle with "Slasher" and I squirmed at the notion that this young homegirl lay in death beside other young "Gs" of questionable repute and of course the book was still not closed.

Years somer-saulted by, and I lived to see more young "Gs" buried one after the other. And the many bloodstained hands, and all I could do is watch passively as much as I could. And I was unprepared for the fact that any day I could pay for the evil with my life. And never an impulse to unite my thoughts of change with self-will.

And if I would of died then that would of been my own fault and not no one elses. I deserved the curses, I didn't want no-peace, my hand holding the sword was Satan's hand the hand that slices, crisscrossed right back!

Tired of going to funerals, tired of all the sadness!

R-I-P "Slasher" "Crazy Lisa" "Suzy Q" "Mary" "Roxanne"

"Grizzly" "Smokey" "Chito" "Benny" "Shorty" "TKO" "Lazy" "Sneaky" "Beto" "Conejo" "Ojos" "Baller" "Payaso" "Cruise" "Porky" "Dynamite" "Drifter" "Solo-Mad" "Snoopy" "Kilo" "Shotgun."

Restoring Lost Love

Look at you, still bitter and angry after all these years,
tentatively you say there's many reasons, with no sin?
But, still haven't claimed back the love and friendship of
family or friend, what a "pity"
Downheartedness and calamity
Nothing is ever "perfect" if it was then we couldn't
learn from God.... Unfold your heart, and look truly
to the supplicant of these faces and "forgive" with no
bitterness -
Only with a sweetness
Abolish the disorderly ways
And treasure the days
We are all God's craftsmanship, and the friendship is
supposed to be –"forever"
Mothers and Fathers, gave us "birth"
Thru Joy, LOVE, and Compassion there's "No other"
No cover
Relatives are the same measure
Individualism is a lonely
Fixture
Brother and Sister is a shining – blessed dove
Where's your "restored lost love"

Tempestuous Marriage

I, a quietistic young "G" have set my heart on her
And I, an overpowering spell shall propose with this gold
ring my crown of "forever"
Two may assume, therefore that I bear bad fruit on my
tree
Like her Moms and Pops who want us marriage –"free"
So then I will marry her without asking for their consent
They wont hear of my entreaties, so I wont relent
"Maybe it's just a lil 'premature' so I thought"
Until they stopped me on the spot
"I was the criminal" I was one she would choose
Or them she would lose
The yoke of which was broken and it was a "go"
Two figures of noble
My stormy young heart just let it equal
I had no qualms
But wondered if her eyes shamed my faults as palm met
palm
Dirty work circle resumed
Ran out of excuses, while dragging my feet, soap opera
turned into falsehood complete
Tempestuous marriage destroyed
Like butter left in the sun I dissolved into the cracks of
prison trespasses
And she was left all alone as I raged and roamed with big
lions without leashes
And what about the love for thee
It was for the "G" assembly.

Many of the mistakes I've made are IRREVERSABLE. I'm unable to resurrect the dead, or to undo the harm I've caused others. But, repentance isn't about changing the past, but transforming your future. It's about not allowing the past to control your present, or define who you are.

read the rest of Mikhail Markhasev's BWO piece on page 52